

Professional Development for Pre-School Teachers: A Multiple Case Study Framed by
Transformative Learning Theory

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Professional Development for Pre-School Teachers: A Multiple Case Study Framed by

Transformative Learning Theory

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ABSTRACT

The pursuit of improved literacy in early childhood education is a way to close the nation's achievement gap between young children learning in poverty and their more affluent peers. Preschool teachers' abilities to effectively deliver instruction may be the key to further narrowing this gap. These assumptions prompt the urgent need for early intervention programs focusing on literacy education for preschool children from low-income, working-class families, especially in urban areas. Preschool teachers also need improved training in early literacy skills-building and professional development to acquire proficiency in early literacy education. This qualitative multiple case study explored the operative elements of a new professional development program framed by transformative learning theory that may transform teaching practices by motivating urban preschool teachers to use *shared book reading* strategies to promote early literacy for their students.

Keywords: Shared book reading, transformative learning theory, critical reflection

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature.....	7
Professional Development in Preschool Settings	7
Urban Preschool Literacy	10
Shared Reading Intervention.....	14
Theoretical Framework.....	16
Transformative Learning Theory.....	17
Role of Reflection	20
Chapter 3: Method	26
Study Design.....	26
Participants.....	29
Role of the Researcher	29
Location	32
Intervention	35
Data Collection	38
Focus Group Discussion.....	42
Data Analysis	42
Validity and Creditability	43
Limitations and Assumptions	45
Chapter 4: Results	47
SBR Observation Assessment Tool.....	56
Case 1: Agatha	56

Case 2: Barbie	62
Case 3: Duckie	67
Case 4: Edward	72
Case 5: Jaylah	76
Case 6: Kory	81
Principal Investigator Perceptions	84
Cross-case Analysis	85
Discussion	95
Chapter 5: Conclusions	99
Adult Learning Theory	97
Motivational Theory	99
Social Learning Theory.....	100
Assumptions.....	101
Implications.....	102
REFERENCES	103
Appendix A. Focus Group Questions	114
Appendix B. Interview Questions.....	116
Appendix C. Instructional Support Codes	118
Appendix D. Participants	119
Appendix E. Lesson Plan.....	120
Appendix F. Timeline	121

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Research Study Timeline	34
Table 2. Cross-Case Analysis of the Data Sources for Research Question 1	51
Table 3. Cross-Case Analysis of Themes for Research Question 2	53
Table 4. Preschool Teacher's Average SBR Scores	55
Table 5. Emergent Themes from the Case Studies	88
Table 6. Participants.....	119
Table 7. Stage Strategy Objectives Goals.....	120
Table 8. Timeline	121

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The elements of transformative learning	20
Figure 2. An illustration of the three research cycles.	23

DEDICATION

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Preschool teachers must meet increasing standards and regulations that amplify their accountability related to student achievement in the classroom. Early childhood education (ECE) increases overall student achievement across grades and may help close the achievement gap within underprivileged communities (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns 2001; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). According to Barnett (2003), well-prepared and well-trained teachers are especially necessary in urban schools because these children have less access to high-quality teachers even though they may benefit the most from high teacher quality. A preschool teacher's ability to improve literacy is a key component to improving early education experiences for under-privileged children (Dickinson & Smith, 1994). As Dickinson and Smith (1994) stated, "a quality preschool experience can accelerate young children's vocabulary, and extend their oral language throughout their educational journey" (p. 108). Therefore, training and professional development (PD) for all preschool teachers, especially urban teachers, in early literacy education may benefit all learners.

Early literacy skills training should include oral vocabulary building, pre-writing practice, and letter-sound correspondence (Dickinson & Smith, 1994). According to McGee and Richgels (2003), preschool children from low-income or working-class families may need more repetition with vocabulary and other literacy skills-building than children from middle-class backgrounds. Teachers in the McGee and Richgels (2003) study grouped children into three groups according to their reading ability (i.e., low, middle, and high level) based on assessment scores. The lower level group received more literacy interventions than their higher performing peers, but these children improved at a

slower rate. Children who started in the lower group rarely improved enough to join the middle or higher reading levels over time. This highlights the need for early, quality intervention for at-risk readers. In general, preschool experiences for low-income children differ greatly from middle-class students for a number of reasons (e.g., untrained preschool teachers in literacy-based pedagogy) (Hemphill & Tivnan, 2008). Lower-income parents often have lower levels of education and are less likely to engage in book reading activities outside of school (Sinatra, 2008). Lower-income early learners have fewer opportunities to build a strong vocabulary, which handicaps their understandings of language and reading (Sinatra, 2008). These facts prompt for the need for early intervention programs that focus on literacy education for preschool children from low-income and working-class families, especially in urban areas. Preschool teachers must receive training in early literacy skills-building through PD to acquire proficiency in early literacy education.

Informed by the findings of the research in this area, this study focused on an urban preschool program located in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Set in lower Fairfield County, Bridgeport is the state's largest city with "a population of approximately 147,000 and an official poverty rate of 20.8%, making it one of the poorest cities in Connecticut" (United States Census Bureau, 2010, para. #). This is two times the state poverty rate of 9.2%. Bridgeport is home to 4% of the state's entire population, and 9% of the state's poor population. Overall, Bridgeport has more than 41% of Fairfield County's population of poor people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Bridgeport ranks lowest in per capita/ per household income in the region as it pertains to annual income (\$19,979) and ranks number one in population density out of

the 169 Connecticut municipalities. In contrast to Bridgeport the adjacent five suburban communities: Fairfield, Monroe, Easton, Trumbull and Stratford, have some of the highest incomes and lowest unemployment rates in the state, each year. (Connecticut Department of Labor Statistics, 2013, para. #).

According to the Connecticut State of the Child Report (2012), the number of poor children in Bridgeport from ages 0 to 18 years rose from 31% in 2010 to 39.9% in 2011, which “represents three times the child poverty rate of Fairfield County,” and higher than the national child poverty rate (para. #). The percent of Bridgeport families who live in poverty and have a child aged 0 to 5 years is 20.6%; there are no such cases in other Connecticut cities (Connecticut State of the Child Report, 2012).

The 2010 Census data revealed that there are 10,160 children under age 5 in Bridgeport (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The Connecticut State of the Child Report (2012) estimated that 25% (2,540 children) of all Bridgeport children under the age of 5 lived in poverty. Based on these figures, the number of children eligible for Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) programs in Greater Bridgeport is approximately 2,540; 1,128 receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits and most HS-eligible children live in Bridgeport (U.S. Census, 2010). The researcher conducted the present study in HS-funded preschool classrooms in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

HS attempted to reduce the achievement gap beginning in 1965. Most of the progress so far relates to *school readiness* (i.e., helping low-income children be better prepared to enter school). Barton (2003) clarified that closing the achievement gap requires more than what HS offers to early learners. According to Barton (2003), policies and practices designed to reduce wide gaps in achievement must encompass a variety of

interventions (e.g., addressing the disparity among races, the vast inequalities in the education system, and ensuring all stakeholders make coordinated efforts to close the achievement gap). The purpose of this study was to explore how a training approach in literacy education designed for preschool teachers in HS-funded preschools changes students' early learning experiences.

Children's' classroom experiences largely rely on teacher actions (Howes et al., 2008; LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2007). The success of poor children's' early educational experiences depends on the skill level and knowledge of their preschool teachers (Barton, 2003). Other contributing factors may include parent involvement and quality of curriculum (Callaghan & Madelaine, 2012). Using data from the Project STAR, Konstantopoulos (2011) randomly assigned students to teachers to study the varying effects of teachers with different skill and knowledge levels on students' academic success across different grades. When low-income children received instruction from effective teachers, their literacy skills increased and their academic achievement improved in reading and math. Konstantopoulos (2011) found that when teachers become more proficient and teach in smaller teacher-to-student ratios, students (especially those from lower performing school districts) receive higher grades. Effective PD for preschool teachers working with poor children is necessary for academic success, despite administrative obstacles and other challenges.

Increased accountability for preschool teachers over time creates a fundamental challenge for their administrators. Administrators must provide effective PD in specific learning areas to help lower-income children build better literacy skills and improve future student achievement. The challenge is the lack of clear guidelines for PD

standards. The State of Connecticut does not have a standardized PD guide for ECE, which causes confusion pertaining to best practices in early learning. The fact that there are no identifiable guidelines, administrative plans, or known resources to keep preschool teachers' meet their educational goals and learning outcomes makes this problem worse.

As the director of a large, urban early learning division of a community agency in Bridgeport, Connecticut that serves a low-income population, it is my administrative responsibility to identify and provide effective PD for preschool teachers. Effective PD includes early literacy skills-training such as oral vocabulary, pre-writing best practices, and expertise in letter-sound correspondence (Dickinson & Smith, 1994). The amount of communication between a preschooler and teacher correlates with the success of language development of poor children. This professional challenge creates the platform for the present research, which adds to the body of knowledge on effective PD strategies for urban preschool teachers.

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study research was to explore the operative elements of PD that lead to the transformation of teaching practices by motivating urban preschool teachers to use *shared book reading* (SBR) strategies to promote early literacy. Callaghan and Madelaine (2012) reviewed longitudinal research on early reading skills, and found SBR strategies strengthen oral language development in young children. PD in SBR is a meaningful way to improve preschool teachers' literacy practices in the classroom, and meet the challenge of growing accountability in the field of ECE. The findings of this study may foster an informative and ever-improving conversation within the field of ECE among early childhood educators, PD designers, policy makers, childcare practitioners, and other early learning stakeholders to

improve PD practices for preschool teachers teaching literacy and increase vocabulary acquisition for low-income preschoolers.

This cross-case analysis revealed themes that support that the participants believed that the study was valuable and that new PD should be mandatory for all teaching staff. Data sources included journal reflections, interviews, focus group, SBR assessment scores, video reflections, and principal investigator (PI) field notes. Participants believed that trainings should begin in the spring, not the fall, and that they experienced a transformation in their teaching practice due to elements of the new PD. The operative elements of the new PD included reflective journaling, video reflections, coaching, and dialogue with the coach. Overall, the cross-case analysis of the data sources supported that PD with elements of transformative learning (i.e., a disorientating dilemma, critical reflection, dialogue, and taking actions to change your practice) facilitated change in participants' teaching practices when using SBR strategies in the classroom (Mezirow, 1997). The participants also believed that implementation of the SBR strategies they learned through the new PD improved children's vocabulary acquisition.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This review of the research literature on the transformation of preschool teachers through PD in SBR and the effectiveness of PD approaches yielded very few studies that addressed both topics together. Researchers addressed the general importance of preschool PD in a preschool setting, but there are no studies that specifically addressed the combined topics of the present research. Past researchers found SBR to be an effective strategy to improve lower-income preschoolers' literacy skills. This chapter includes individual reviews of these topics to establish the need for further research.

Professional Development in Preschool Settings

The National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI, 2008) indicated that PD encompasses “facilitated teaching and learning experiences that are transactional” to “support the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions” as well as the “application of this knowledge to practice” (p. 3). However, there is little agreement on “which approach to professional development would be most useful to the early childhood educator: technical assistance, coaching, consultation, mentoring and/or communities of practice” (NPDCI, 2008, p. 2). Therefore, reaching a “consensus” and “having a shared knowledge” of what PD is effective for early educators is “necessary in order to evaluate its effects on improving professional practices, and producing positive child and family outcomes” (NPDCI, 2008, p. 3). For this study, the operational definition of PD includes approaches that offer access to “evidence-based best practices” in early childhood teaching and learning, “consistent with the theories of adult learning” and “responds to each educator’s role and context” and “each learner’s

background” (National Association for the Education of the Young Children (NAEYC), 2016, p. 5).

Neuman and Cunningham (2009) studied the impact of coaching and PD on teaching early language and literacy and found coaching fosters better learning outcomes for students. They randomly assigned 148 teachers from six urban cities to group 1 (coursework), group 2 (on-site coaching), or group 3 (control group). Pre- and post-assessments collected data regarding teachers’ knowledge of language and literacy practices. Teachers who received coaching made statistically significant improvements in the structural classroom environment both immediately and five months later. Effect sizes were substantial for coaching. Teachers who received coursework made no significant improvements. To be an effective teacher, an educator needs the skills necessary for “individualizing learning experiences and engaging children” (Neuman & Cunningham, 2009, p. 542). Coaching is more effective than coursework in changing classroom environments. By engaging in and reflecting on their practices, the teachers incorporated new physical design features, supports, and strategies into daily lesson plans. Coaching may represent a good investment within early childhood PD. Therefore, elements of PD for early childhood educators should include coaching, child psychology theories, and early literacy education (Neuman & Cunningham, 2009).

Kraft, Blazer, and Hogan (2016) conducted meta-analysis of the mean effects of coaching on teachers’ instructional practice and students’ academic achievement using 37 studies that employed causal research designs. They found combined effect sizes of 57 standard deviations (SD) on instruction and 11 SD on student achievement (Kraft et al., 2016). Most of this evidence came from studies of literacy coaching, which had an effect

of 14 SD on reading achievement. Cohen's D is the measurement of effect size when groups are compared. Cohen's D of 0.5 is a medium effect (below 0.5 is not important), and Cohen's D above 0.8 is important. This does not indicate a major change in student achievement, but has promising implication for more research in this area. Kraft et al. (2016) indicated issues with bringing this model of PD to scale with fidelity in large school districts; coaching shows statistical effectiveness in improving teachers' practice.

There are many qualitative studies of early childhood learning guidance and its use in preschool programs. This topic frames the design of the present research by through various state practices and current trends in early childhood standards. Early childhood standards are the foundation of most preschool learning. Lesko, Martella, Milburn, and Scott-Little (2007) examined current policies and practices related to early learning standards and published results from the National Survey to Document Trends in State-Level Policies and Practices. They used a 72 -item instrument with a combination of closed- and open-ended questions in the following categories: early learning standards (21 questions), child assessments (35 questions), and program assessment (14 questions) (Lesko et al., 2007). Early education specialists from all over the United States completed the online survey in collaboration with state program specialists with an 82% return rate. There was no uniform, systematic set of standards in the U.S. and many states developed their own guidelines. Lesko et al. (2007) concluded that preschool teachers would benefit from a uniform set of guidelines to align their practices across the nation. There is a need for uniformity of early learning practice in order to construct effective PD programs that improve teaching skills. The NPDCI (2008) supports "a state-level planning process" that leads to a "single, integrated professional

development system that incorporates professional learning resources and opportunities across all sectors of early childhood programs” (p. 1).

Ackerman and Sansanelli (2009) surveyed 391 ECE providers by phone across the state of New Jersey. They asked how early learning program guidelines inform teachers’ work. Some directors who participated in this study reported that they did not understand the language of the preschool guidelines. Others stated that their program guidelines for preschool learning were not based on anything specific. The responses from preschool administrators indicated a need for a common language and a shared understanding among preschool providers who use state guidelines for federally-funded early learning programs (Ackerman & Sansanelli, 2009). The present research may create a conversation among early childhood educators about the need for uniform preschool guidelines that inform new PD approaches for this population.

Urban Preschool Literacy

Dail and McGee (2011) demonstrated the effectiveness of PD while teaching literacy to poor preschoolers in urban settings. They observed the academic improvement of low-income preschool children exposed to a greater number of vocabulary words in preschool classrooms, and added a PD for greater exposure of vocabulary words. Dail and McGee (2011) showed that children from urban, lower-income families have notable learning delays, especially in vocabulary acquisition and oral language skills. The most useful and productive PD approaches facilitated an increase in the preschoolers’ vocabulary and literacy skills (e.g., modeling teaching strategies, demonstrations of lesson plans by experts in the field, and coaching/mentoring partnerships for best practices). These PD approaches increased the literacy skills of preschool children as

measured by the Early Language and Literacy Observation Checklist (Smith & Dickinson, 2002). “Annually, the children in the project classrooms outperformed control children on measures of phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and print awareness” (Dail & McGee, 2011, p. #). The present study began with the assumption that this PD approach may also promote greater educational success for the children and transformative learning for the teacher participants in the study. This research study is connected to Dail and McGee’s (2011) study because both explore the effectiveness of a PD strategy when teaching literacy to poor preschoolers and include coaching or modeling teaching strategies for best practices.

According to Beauchat, Blamey, and Walpole (2009), “storybook shared reading” (i.e., SBR) helped preschool students learn reading basics, such as; “how to hold a book and turn the pages from left to right” and how to “differentiate between words and pictures” (p. 34). Beauchat et al. (2009) developed a PD tool called an Innovation Configuration (IC), a literacy and language identification tool specifically for SBR to help preschool educators improve their literacy teaching skills by allowing them to (a) identify essential literacy and language components appropriate for a specific book; (b) plan how to target these areas before, during, and after their shared reading; and (c) reflect on their practice. ICs assess current teacher preparation and PD by determining the extent to which teacher preparation and PD programs teach, observe, and apply evidence-based practices.

Pentimonti, Zucker, and Justice (2011) stressed that “shared reading” promoted attention and contributed to “vocabulary acquisition and letter recognition” (p. 230). They described preschool read-aloud techniques according to the types of texts children

read. The methods involved analyzing the type of text genre and instructional focus of 426 titles read by 13 teachers during an entire academic year. Pentimonti et al. (2011) also examined connections between teacher characteristics and texts teachers read in their classrooms, and found that (a) narrative texts were the most common genre for read-aloud; (b) children's exposure to alphabet books, nursery rhymes, books featuring math concepts, and multicultural content occurred at generally low rates; and (c) few significant associations existed between quantity of books read and teacher characteristics. Pentimonti et al. (2011) provided strong evidence that language and literacy skills-building through SBR relates to teachers' skill levels and approaches to learning.

Beauchat et al. (2009) developed a PD program for preschool educators to promote innovative SBR strategies as part of literacy training. SBR

...allowed a preschool teacher to identify essential literacy and language components appropriate for a specific book; it helps the teacher plan how to target the areas before, during, and after their shared reading, and, most importantly; the approach encourages teachers' reflection on their practice. (Beauchat et al., 2009, p. 35)

By offering preschool educators PD training in the shared reading approach, Beauchat et al. (2009) observed a change in teachers' abilities to support students' literacy and language development and an increase in teachers' reflective practices. Beauchat et al. (2009) identified levers for change that included: 1) All major stakeholders participate in planning and evaluating the teacher preparation and professional development programs. 2) Strong subject matter preparation is essential. 3) National teaching and state student

achievement standards provide the framework for restructuring. 4) Coherence is evident within a program's mission and alignment among course work, field experiences, and state and district standards. 5) Teacher preparation is field-based and collaboratively designed and managed. 6) Regular feedback on candidate and program performance is used to support and sustain changes in teacher preparation. 7) Extensive clinical experiences include opportunities for active learning (e.g., supervised practice with feedback, reviewing student work). 8) The integration of evidence-based teaching strategies receives high priority (p. #). The present researcher engaged in similar processes to gain transformative learning for the participants.

The increased need for the development of skilled preschool teachers and the improvement of literacy skills for urban children require more studies that explain the relationship between teachers and learners. Attempts to improve student achievement through stronger teacher accountability must include improving the field of ECE through PD. Researchers indicated the value of high quality early learning literacy experiences (Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Neuman & Cunningham, 2009; Reardon, 2011). Students preschool experiences with vocabulary (intensive oral vocabulary building, pre-writing, letter-sound correspondence, and repetition) promote literacy development, especially for lower-income preschool students with limited school readiness skills.

Most early learning researchers stressed that high quality ECE has benefits that lead to long-lasting positive effects for children in many areas of their lives including cognitive and social emotional wellness (Barnett, 2003). Children who live in poverty have more need for these benefits because they lack resources in their homes and communities to succeed; a high quality ECE experience can significantly close the

achievement gap between poor minorities and upper-class whites (Farkas & Beron, 2004; Johnson, 2006).

Landry, Swank, Smith, Assel, and Gunnewig (2006) suggested that the best way to close the achievement gap is to improve the literacy skills of urban preschool children at the earliest age possible, prior to entering a formal educational setting. In this quasi-experimental study, Landry et al. (2006) evaluated a statewide intervention targeting preschool teachers' enhancement of children's language and early literacy over 2 years at 20 HS sites with 750 teachers. They compared teachers with two years of training to teachers with one year of training and with control teachers. Landry et al. (2006) reported greater gains for children in target classrooms than for those in control classrooms for all skills, but particularly for language skills in the second year. Research-based early literacy curriculum, higher levels of teacher education, and full-day versus half-day preschool programs were significant moderators of intervention effectiveness (Landry et al., 2006).

Shared Reading Intervention

There is little research that focuses on interventions and pedagogical approaches that best strengthen early literacy skills for urban preschool children, but there are many interventions that are effective for improving early literacy skills in all preschool children. These interventions are based on the acquisition of language skills, phonological awareness, and alphabetic awareness (Landry et al., 2006). The acquisition of words also improves literacy of preschoolers (Sinatra, Zygouris-Coe, & Dasinger, 2011).

Sinatra (2008) stated “the major handicapping condition” for children living in poverty is the “size of their vocabularies” (p. 174). Phonological awareness is an indicator of a child’s literacy development, and several studies validated phonological awareness as a strategy for improving literacy among preschoolers (Sinatra, 2008). Knowledge of words is critical for “success in school and life”; therefore, early childhood educators working with children from poor households must use effective interventions to create “vocabulary acquisition environments” in their classrooms (Sinatra, 2008, p. 175). The present research explored a new PD approach to SBR to transform teachers’ practices and increase children’s vocabulary.

Successful interventions include four broad suggestions: (a) use of enhanced talk in the classroom; (b) capitalizing on the rich vocabulary of children's book authors; (c) manipulating morphemes with word roots; and (d) developing the vocabulary of informational topics that strengthen literacy development (Sinatra, 2008). The program intervention with the greatest outcome for learning new vocabulary for lower-income and limited-vocabulary children was the “storybook read-alouds” (Sinatra, 2008, p. 338). For young children to hear, react to, and form mental images and ideas about stories that teachers read aloud to them offers more opportunity to develop new vocabulary than watching television (Sinatra, 2008). The key was the “teacher’s ability to talk to the children with engaging dialogue, and open-ended questions” pertaining to the storybook (Sinatra et al., 2011, p. 339).

Teachers’ engagement in dialogue and stimulating communication with young learners support vocabulary acquisition and literacy development (Yoshikawa et al., 2013). Teachers who encouraged storybook participation through conversations about the

content and word meanings increased young learners' vocabulary knowledge (Barnett, 2003; Callaghan & Madelaine, 2012; Landry et al., 2011; Yoshikawa et al., 2013). Camilli, Vargas, Ryan, and Barnett (2010) conducted a meta-analysis of 84 diverse early education programs for young children between 1965 and 2007 and estimated the average post-program impact on the learners to be about 35 standard deviations. This effect size is low, but it represented about a third of a year of additional learning, above and beyond what occurred without access to preschool. This data included well-known small demonstration programs (e.g., Perry Preschool) that produced large effects and large preschool programs (e.g., HS) that had lower costs and more modest effects. Camilli et al. (2010) also included evaluations of at-scale urban prekindergarten programs with large effects (between a half of a year to a full year of additional learning) on language, literacy, and math. Based on this meta-analysis, preschool teachers require training in communicational and vocabulary-focused interventions to support the development of word learning for children in lower-income families. The present study focused on the delivery of a new PD on a communicational and vocabulary-focused intervention, namely SBR, for urban preschool teachers in HS-funded classrooms.

Theoretical Framework

The researcher's constructivist worldview holistically framed the present study (i.e., the theoretical belief that people learn best through experiencing and reflecting on knowledge). Learning is active, ongoing, and socially-constructed. When a person encounters new information, they must balance the new information with previously-held ideas and beliefs or change what they previously thought to be true. This change of perception and transformative learning due to the experience of receiving new

information is *learning* according to adult learning theory; “we are active creators of our own learning” (Gredler, 1997, p. 380). I used a theoretical scaffold which combines my constructivist worldview with Mezirow’s (1978) transformative learning framework in order to explore the answers to the research questions in this study.

Bruner (1990) and Piaget (1972) are the chief theorists among cognitive constructivists. They asserted that people construct their own understandings and knowledge of the world through experiences and by reflecting on those experiences. New experience reconciles with previous ideas, which may change beliefs or result in discarding of new information as irrelevant. Nonetheless, through constructivist we are active creators of our own knowledge. People enquire, explore, observe, and assess knowledge. Within this study, the PD experience for each preschool teacher’s experiences and learning was co-constructed and connected through the new PD.

Transformative Learning Theory

Mezirow’s (1978) transformative learning theory (TLT) emerged from the study of women reentering the workforce or education after an extended time to identify factors at community colleges that limited or helped women’s progress. Mezirow (1978) collected data from 83 women in 12 programs that were geographically, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse at four community colleges; 24 campuses participated in a follow-up survey. Mezirow (1978) also surveyed 1,172 two-year colleges across the U.S. with 314 reentry programs, and interviewed over 70 women to gather evidence of their development after they participated in reentry programs (Taylor & Cranton, 2012).

Mezirow (1978) revealed a nine-phase process that resulted in a change in the “meaning perspective,” defined as “psychological structures with dimensional thought,

feeling and will” (p. 108) and a “personal paradigm for understanding ourselves and relationships” (p. 101). Mezirow (1978) added that “by recognizing our social, economic, political psychological, and religious assumptions” that shape our lives, we can change personal thoughts and criteria for evaluating change (p. 7). The nine phases included:

1. A distorting dilemma;
2. Self-examination;
3. A critical assessment of sex roles assumptions and a sense of alienation form taken for granted social roles and expectations;
4. Relating to one’s discontent to a current public issue;
5. Exploring options for new ways of living;
6. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles;
7. Planning a course of action acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing ones’ plan;
8. Provisional efforts to try new roles;
9. A reintegration into society on the basis of conditions dictated by the new perspective. (Mezirow, 1978, p. 12)

Mezirow’s (1978) TLT also included references to Freire (1970), Khun, and Fingarette. There were similarities between Freire’s (1970) conscientization and transformation, including recognition of the disorientating dilemma, importance of dialogue, and critical reflection.

In the 1980s, Mezirow embraced Jurgen Habermas’ three learning domains and refined his TLT to “dialogic learning (discussion with others where meaning was validated through consensus), emancipatory learning (self- reflective practice), then

knowledge was acquired through critical self- awareness” (Mezirow, 1981, p. 5).

Mezirow’s TLT is the main theoretical lens of the present study grounded in the belief that identifying a dilemma, engaging in dialogue, and critical self-reflection may lead to transformation of participants’ ideologies about the new PD and their skills when teaching literacy to poor preschool children.

According to Mezirow (2000), transformative learning is the use of “prior interpretation” of an experience to “construe a new or revised interpretation” of experience as to “guide future action” (p. 162). Components of transformative learning include “self-examination of one’s assumptions [...] exploration of options for new roles and new action[...] acquisition of new knowledge and skills [...] trying out the new role and new action,” and “building confidence within the new role” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 8). The ability of participants to reflect and discuss PD experiences contributes to a better understanding of the teachers’ changed views of reality (Lather, 1992; Miller & Crabtree, 1999; Robottom & Hart, 1993; Searle, 1995).

TLT relies on the learner’s ability to “critically reflect” on personal behaviors and question tightly-held beliefs (Clark, 1996; Cooper, 2009; Cranton, 1996). Cranton (1996) explained,

...an individual becomes aware of holding a limiting or distorted view, if the individual critically examines this view, opens herself to alternatives, and consequently changes the way she sees things, therefore; she has transformed some part of how she makes meaning out of the world. (p. 74)

Mezirow’s (1981) TLT, as it applied in the present study, required identifying a disorientating dilemma (narrowing the achievement gap with improved preschool

teacher's literacy practice), critical reflection (the participants journaled and viewed their practice on videotape, dialogue (participants dialogued with a coach and then planned and acted on changing their practice).

The elements of Mezirow's (1981) transformative learning cycle appear throughout the present study (see Figure 1). I assumed the introduction of the disorientating dilemma of narrowing the achievement gap via improved preschool teacher literacy practices, the facilitation of dialogue and deep critical reflection with coaches, and videotape viewing and journaling during the new PD based on SBR would transform preschool teachers' practice and improve literacy skills of their students.

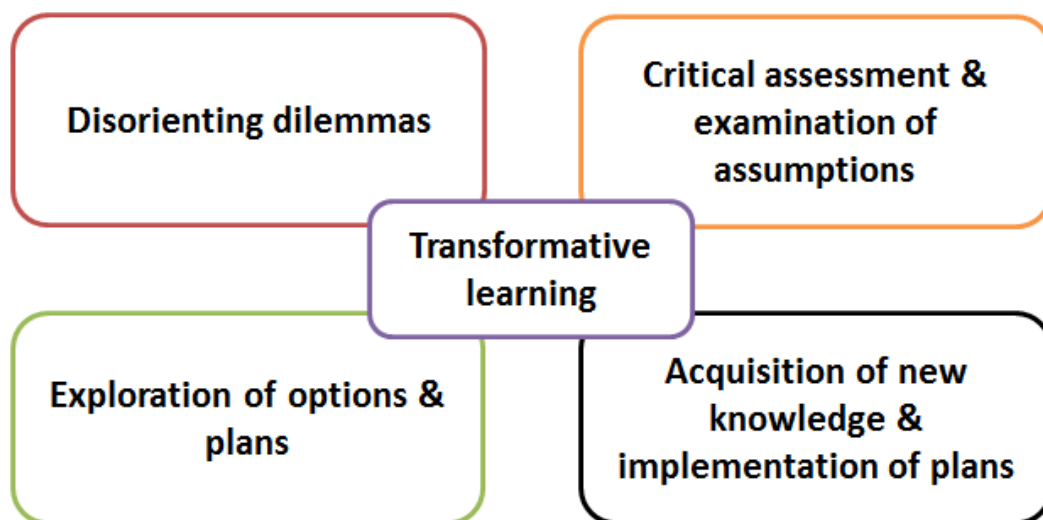


Figure 1. The elements of transformative learning.

Role of Reflection

The role of reflection in this study is the most important aspect of transformative learning and it is a core element of TLT; reflective practice involves using information from a former experience or practice to improve future practice (Schon, 1991). According

to Schon (1991), there are three major assumptions in the process of reflective practice. First, those who practice reflection want to find the problem and the solution as part of the process. This assumption maintains that finding the problem in practice is often unclear and undefined. This requires an open mind to different ways of approaching old problems and discovering new ones. The second assumption relates to making judgments about the actions in a particular situation. This involves making ethical decisions to change the self, others, and systems. The third major assumption of reflective practice is that it may result in change, but the process is incomplete without action. I acknowledged all of these assumptions, including the action process, during the teaching of the intervention section in the present study. I discussed the assumptions throughout the observation phase of the study and during the feedback from coaches. Teacher participants critically reflected on their practice during the intervention phase of the study, while watching videotapes, participating in the interviews and focus groups, and during the journaling process. Theoretically, reflective practice can result in the most thoughtful and useful change in an individual's practice and solve problems. Tinsley and Lebak (2009) studied *collaborative learning* to show how teachers who used a reflective practice perceived themselves as more empowered educators.

Mezirow (1981) articulated the importance of critical reflection for people to become "aware of their behaviors, thinking and acting" (p. 12). There are several types of reflectivity, such as affective, critical, conceptual, and theoretical (Mezirow, 1981). Critical reflection in the current study was an essential element for the teacher participants to experience the new PD and explore its potential to lead to change.

Self-reflection does not produce the same transforming results as “peer collaborative reflection” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p.120). Zeichner and Liston (1996) explained, “solitary self-reflection can lead to deceiving oneself through viewing oneself solely through the lens of one’s own self-beliefs and assumptions” (p. 56). For purposes of the present study, teacher participants reflected on their practice with peers and with their coaches to avoid the pitfalls of solitary self-reflection. TLT played an important role in this research by scaffolding the study. The major dimensions of TLT (i.e., changing your mind, challenging belief systems, and changing behaviors through communication, reflection, and dialogue) led to teacher participants’ practice improvement.

Goker (2016) explored the use of reflective journals in the development of teachers’ leadership and teaching skills, focusing on the contribution of reflective practice to teaching practice among student teachers. Goker (2016) examined the impact of reflective journal entries of 16 student teachers using open-ended questioning techniques (surveys and interviews) and written reflections under reflective categories to show how participants reflected on teaching experiences as anecdotal data. The participants completed a 10-hour reflective writing program and then answered a 26-question open-ended questionnaire. The findings revealed that reflective journals in school-based contexts and pre-service teacher education may improve critical views of teacher practice. The present study used journaling for critical reflection as an important element of transformative learning for the participants.

The new PD model in the present study allowed teachers to work with educational specialists from varied backgrounds and educational experiences as their coaches. The model follows the Tinsley and Lebak (2009) plan, “which allows teachers to engage in

systematic, self and collaborative reflection” (p. 1). They focused on a video-centered communities of practice (VCCOP) model; teachers used videos as a focus point of their daily practice to collaboratively reflect with other teachers on their practice in a safe structured environment (Tinsley & Lebak, 2009). Teachers also worked in each other’s classrooms and actively pursued ways to improve their practice. This model was an effective way for teachers to develop their skills as a community of learners. An illustration of this research proposal design appears in Figure 2, which shows the cycles of reflection (experience, practice, and reflection) that may result in a change in practice.

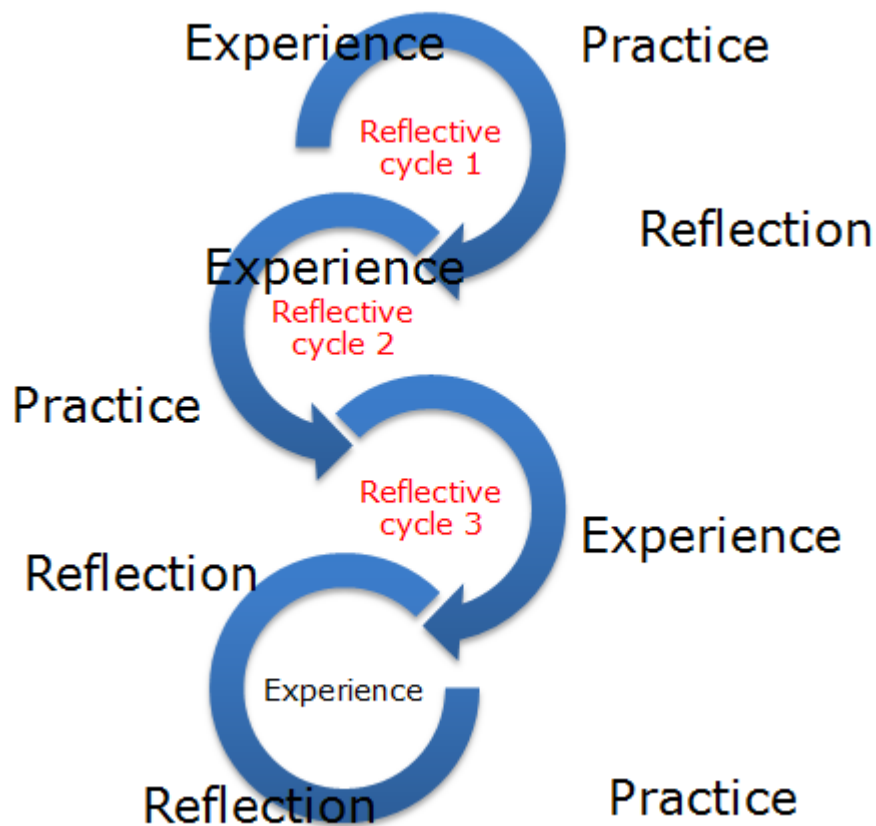


Figure 2. An illustration of the three research cycles.

The present study investigated whether urban preschool teachers engage in changes via transformative learning that improve teaching practices through a PD experience using a SBR pedagogical approach. Many PD programs stress obtaining the *knowledge* of a topic and enumerate the components of that approach in detail. PD programs often assume a “separation between knowing and doing,” which Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) called an “artificial breach” that will “inevitably limit the effectiveness of such a practice” (p. 32). The activity of the SBR approach in the classroom was an integral part of the new PD experience in the present study. Integrating the “knowledge” of the approach with the “doing” of the approach is what Brown et al. (1989) called “cognitive apprenticeship” (p. 34). Brown et al. (1989) explained that “embedding learning in activity makes deliberate use of context, and is more in line with the understanding of how people really learn” (p. 34).

The main objective of the present study was to explore how the new PD program, viewed through a transformative lens, influenced the teaching practice of preschool teacher participants using a qualitative multiple case study research design. This research design facilitated the exploration of the research questions via the use of the intervention (PD), which focused on the SBR approach. The research questions for the study are as follows:

1. What are preschool teachers’ perceptions of this new approach to professional development?
2. How does PD implemented through a theoretical lens of transformative learning theory influence preschool teachers’ practice?

Exploring the perceptions of the teachers as it pertains to the new PD is important because teachers' beliefs, practices, and attitudes are essential for understanding and improving educational processes (OECD, 2009). Teachers' strategies shape students' learning environments and influence student motivation and achievement. Newman and Way (2009) explained that "teachers' individual perceptions and the differences they bring to their classroom environments are becoming increasingly recognized as fundamental contributors influencing the way they teach, and how they motivate and engage their students" (p. 1). This notion influences action when preschool teachers transform their practice after learning the elements of Mezirow's (1981) transformative learning framework in the new PD. More specifically, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the operative elements of PD that lead to the transformation of teaching practices by motivating urban preschool teachers to use SBR strategies to promote early literacy for their students to narrow the gap in achievement between poor children and their more affluent peers.

Chapter 3: Method

Study Design

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the operative elements of PD that transform teaching practices by motivating urban preschool teachers to use SBR strategies to promote early literacy for their students. According to Callaghan and Madelaine (2012), SBR strategies strengthen oral language development in young children. As such, PD in the SBR approach may improve preschool teachers' literacy practice in the classroom to meet the challenge of growing accountability in the field of ECE (Pollard-Durodola, Gonzalez, Simmons, & Simmons, 2011). The present study may create an informative and ever-improving conversation within the field of ECE among early childhood educators, PD designers, policy makers, childcare practitioners, and other early learning stakeholders to improve PD practices for preschool teachers teaching literacy and vocabulary acquisition to low-income preschoolers.

A multiple case methodology was ideal for this study because it “enables the researcher to explore differences within and between cases” (Yin, 2003, p. 154). According to Baxter and Jack (2008), researchers use case studies to answer “how and why” questions in research (p. 545). The main objective of this study was to find out how a PD program influences the teaching practice of preschool teacher participants. A multiple case study design best facilitated the exploration of the participants' perceptions about the use of PD to train teachers on the SBR approach. The research questions are:

1. What are preschool teachers' perceptions of this new approach to professional development?

2. How does PD implemented through a theoretical lens of transformative learning theory influence preschool teachers' practice?

This research study design explored the training of preschool teachers in a new PD based on SBR framed by TLT. Six preschool teachers completed the new PD and three research cycles: experience, reflection, and practice. Elements of the new PD included critical reflective journaling, modeling and dialoguing with a coach, and the use of video recording reflections.

Patton (2014) stated, “a hallmark of case study research is the use of multiple data sources, a strategy which also enhances data credibility” (p. 483). The present study included multiple data sources to evaluate the multiple facets of the PD program, framed by TLT’s influence on participants’ practice. Patton (2014) noted that, “data from multiple sources” should be “converged in the analysis process rather than handled individually” (p. 490). The data in this study came from a variety of sources: communication (dialogue), journaling, focus groups, interviews, self-reflection prompted by the use of videotapes and journaling, and observation of the teachers’ practices using the SBR approach. Each data source is “one piece of the puzzle” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 546). The convergence of the data should increase understanding of whether the PD intervention was effective.

Triangulation of the data from multiple sources (case analyses, cross-case analyses of emergent themes, and coding of videotaped classroom teaching) constructed a deeper interpretation of the potential teaching practice transformation from various perspectives (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 547). The seven data sources addressed the research questions via (a) teacher participant journals; (b) videotapes; (c) SBR

observation assessment instrument; (d) coaches' journals; (e) PI field notes; (f) interviews; and (g) focus group transcripts.

Two coaches evaluated each participant using the SBR assessment tool. This approach provided an inter-rater reliability analysis of the observation data to ensure reliability of the data sources. The coaches compared scores and communicated about differences to reach a consensus about the scores, then shared results with the participant to begin dialogue. Baxter and Jack's (2008) technique established credibility and dependability of the research findings. "Multiple researchers should code a set of data independently, and then meet together to come to a consensus on the emerging codes and themes/categories" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 548). Inter-rater reliability between the researcher and a colleague who coded the interviews and the focus group transcripts found 75% inter-rater agreement for similar themes. Participants completed informed consent forms according to the University of Bridgeport IRB process. The study occurred over nine months in three stages, and concluded with the analysis of the data.

The purpose of this case study was to explore the effective elements of a PD program to transform a learning framework to motivate urban preschool teachers to change their classroom practice. The PD intervention, with a focus on SBR, may help teachers meet the challenge of growing accountability in the field of ECE. Offering early learners' literacy skill-building, vocabulary acquisition, and enhancement through the SBR intervention may narrow the national achievement gap between lower-income children and more affluent children. PD with SBR engaged preschool students in productive educational experiences to develop early literacy proficiency. The Center for

Public Education (2005) supported that poor children are more likely to get unprepared and ineffectively trained teachers when they need them the most.

Participants

This research included thirteen early learning centers; six teachers and five coaches participated in this study. The six preschool teachers educated children from ages 3 to 5 years. Each classroom had a 1 to 10 teacher-to-student ratio and 20 or fewer children. Each classroom had one lead teacher (the participant) and one assistant teacher. At times, a floating aide assisted in the classroom. This study included only the lead preschool teachers.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher had both emic and etic stances during the study, depending on the task. While visiting and observing classrooms and receiving quarterly monitoring reports from program staff, the researcher had an etic role. The researcher analyzed these reports and provided recommendations for improvements and follow-up to strengthen the program. The researcher was not the direct supervisor of any teachers or coaches in this study, and did not evaluate classroom teachers as part of the work responsibilities. This researcher had an etic stance when viewing ensuring that teachers received appropriate PD for positive outcomes for children. The researcher provided participants with lessons learned from this research in the capacity of a researcher, not as an administrator.

The researcher's participation focused on teaching the PD intervention of the SBR approach to enhance literacy education for preschool children while fostering a transformative learning experience for teacher participants. This capacity required an etic stance. While in this role, the researcher encouraged critical self-reflection of the teacher

participants' practice and promoted awareness of assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors that may be counterproductive to behavioral change. According to Tinsley and Lebak (2009), "a reflective approach involves teachers observing, assessing, and reflecting systematically on their classroom practices with the goal of a greater understanding of practice and the ability to transform practice when needed" (p. 3). As the primary researcher, my main objective was to facilitate a reflective approach with the teacher participants and members of the focus groups, during the interviews, and during training of the coaches. This study "created a community of learners who are united in a shared experience of trying to make meaning of their experience" (Loughlin, 1993, p. 120). In this study, teacher participants in the PD program constructed personal meaning to improve their preschool teaching practice via the SBR approach to literacy education.

I provided the teacher participants with opportunities to effectively participate in critical examination and dialogue by allowing time for the coaches/educational specialists to engage them in reflective work based on their videotaped practice. Consistent communication with the coach/educational specialist concerning the assessment outcomes occurred during the study. Furthermore, I conducted an analysis of critical content described in the focus groups. This researcher continued to encourage dialogue from different perspectives by using educational specialists as coaches for the SBR-based PD intervention. However, I did not participate in the discussions with coaches and preschool teacher participants in an effort to keep the teacher participants' reactions spontaneous and unfiltered. Marzano (2012) suggested that the key to learning is positive attitude and perception in the classroom. When teachers have a positive perception about what they are learning and teaching children, they are more successful. This researcher

sought to identify the preschool teachers' perceptions of the new approach to PD and observe a transformative change in their teaching practice.

Role of the educational specialists as teacher coaches.

An educational specialist paired with each participating teacher based on mutual preference and common schedules. The role of the specialist as a coach was to help the teacher improve skills in SBR strategies through observations, coaching, and engagement in planning meetings to share feedback from observations. Specialist had the role of teacher-coaches in this study. Their role aligned with TLT elements when they dialogued about the discourse in the achievement gap and in their support of teachers' transformational learning within three reflective cycles. Each coach spent an average of three hours per week modeling SBR strategies in the classroom. Five coaches participated in the study. Four coaches worked with one teacher each, and one coach worked with two participants. There were not enough coaches with compatible schedules for a one to one ratio. Prior to the study, specialists participated in an annual training program provided by their supervisor to become effective coaches. The NAEYC (2016) approved and recommended this training. The role of the specialist was to model SBR strategies for the teacher participants and discuss them during coaching sessions about improvements and changes that might benefit learners. The coaches observed the teachers while they implemented SBR-based teaching strategies and provided feedback to the participants about their practice. They also engaged in dialogue with individual participants and journaled their interactions with them throughout the study. The coaches received a 4-hour training in the use of the SBR assessment and strategies provided by the PI prior to the beginning of the study. This training included the effective elements of

SBR as detailed in the current literature. The coaches assessed the teachers during stages I to III of the research using the SBR assessment scores for teacher feedback.

Role of the graduate assistant.

A graduate assistant conducted individual interviews with the teacher participants and led focus group discussions. These interviews were 30-minute, semi-structured interview sessions that the researcher designed to answer the research questions and probe into teachers' transformative learning. The graduate assistant was CITI certified and had experience with interview and focus group protocol consistent with ethical research procedures. The graduate assistant conducted the interviews for this study by asking semi-structured questions and recording the participants' responses. The graduate assistant was familiar with the study from past knowledge of the research proposal. The interviews occurred at the end of the study in stage VI. The graduate assistant also signed a confidentiality agreement so that participant and study confidentiality was secure throughout the study.

Location

This study occurred in urban preschool environments in Bridgeport and Stratford, Connecticut. Each center had varying numbers of classroom and staff. The researcher ensured that all teachers understood that the PD program was part of a research study that the investigator designed. Participation in this study was voluntary, as stated in the approved informed consent form. There was no professional repercussion or negative consequence if a preschool teacher chose not to participate. Teachers who chose not to participate had the choice of engaging in other professional activities during the same time slot as the PD (e.g., trainings on teacher interactions with students or parents).

After the researcher fully explained study, the preschool teachers completed the written consent form at their convenience prior to engaging in the PD program. The teachers received the informed consent form and had a reasonable amount of time to reflect on the study prior to signing the form. They chose pseudonyms to protect their identity. The six teachers and five educational specialists/coaches voluntarily accepted the invitation. Table 1 shows the timeline of the project.

Table 1. *Research Study Timeline*

Tentative Date	Program Stage	Description	Data Sources and Role
Summer 2016	Invitations to coaches and teachers Directors' approval Confidentiality agreements signed by specialists	Information sessions	PI field notes Reflection
Summer 2016	Coach training	Three shared book strategies and the use of the SBR assessment.	PI field notes Instruction of the intervention with the use of the new PD
Summer 2016	Teacher training in video usage	Teachers trained by the PI to keep children out of the view of the camera and focus on their practice	PI field notes Confidentiality of the children in the classroom
Summer 2016	Stage I	PD on shared reading strategy 1 Coaches modeled strategy, followed by teachers' implementation and videotaping Reflection on new implementation with coaches Coaches share their SBR assessment with teachers	Journal notes specialists Reflection journals Teachers PI field notes for feedback purposes and planning for stage II
Fall 2016	Stage II	PD on shared reading strategy 2 Coaches model strategy, followed by teachers'	Journal notes Coaches' reflection journals Teachers and PI field notes for

		implementation and videotaping Reflection on new implementation with coaches Coaches share their SBR assessment with teachers	feedback purposes Planning for stage III
Winter 2017	Stage III	PD on shared reading strategy 3 Coaches modeled strategy, followed by teachers' implementation and videotaping Reflection on new implementation with coaches Coaches share their SBR assessment with teachers	Journal notes Coaches' reflection journals Teachers and PI field notes for feedback purposes
Spring 2017	Stage IV	Focus groups and individual interviews led by UB graduate assistant with teachers	Transcripts of both focus group and teacher interviews Field notes Journal notes from teachers and coaches to address the research questions

Intervention

This research study occurred over the course of the 2016-2017 academic year. Stage I took place in late summer of 2016, stage II in the fall of 2016, stage III during the winter of 2017, and Stage IV in the spring of 2017. This study began in the summer of 2016 and concluded in the spring of 2017. In May of 2016, the PI obtained IRB approval

and site approval from the agency executive director. The PI then visited each site in June 2016 to meet lead teachers and explain the study. Educational specialist (veteran preschool teachers with extensive experience and expertise) had at least a bachelor's degree in the field participated as preschool teacher coaches. All participants signed confidentiality agreements at that time. The coaches completed training in SBR strategies and assessment in July 2016. The preschool teachers and educational specialists received training in video recording techniques that excluded children from the footage and captured their SBR strategies. There were three PD sessions; each session was about 60 minutes long and included all preschool teacher participants.

Prior to the study, the PI recruited preschool teachers by visiting each site and speaking to them individually in an office that was not publicly accessible. Ultimately, six teachers of the possible 49 agreed to sign consent forms and participate. The first week after each PD session, coaches videotaped teachers for 15-20 minutes to record their practice of the SBR intervention. The teachers watched the footage and journaled their reflections on the videotaped lesson. Teachers received training from the PI on the elements and processes of reflective journaling pertaining to the new PD on SBR. Coaches observed, coached, and dialogued with the teachers between PD sessions, and both journaled their reflections on the PD. During the dialogues between coaches and preschool teachers, they discussed their likes and dislikes of the new PD, talked about how it could be changed and improved to fit their needs while teaching, and discussed reflections about their own practice, skills, and knowledge. The coaches assessed the teachers using the SBR assessment and shared the scores for reflection after stages I to

III. They shared these scores in dialogue between the preschool teachers and the coaches for reflective purposes only.

During stage I, the training in August 2016 included a SBR strategy called inquiry *throughout the day* based on an expanded use of vocabulary. This session focused on extending students' vocabulary based on the book throughout the day. Teachers wrote vocabulary words on index cards in the classroom for daily use. They were easy reminders of the vocabulary words. The coaches encouraged the preschool teachers to add more words daily to expand conversations throughout the day based on the book. Within a week of this training, coaches modeled the strategy for teachers and visited them regularly to communicate and encourage strategies in the classroom. The teachers viewed at least two 20-minute videos of their teaching for reflection and journaling purposes between trainings. Videos remained in the possession of the teachers for reflective purposes, and teachers deleted them within 48 hours after reflection. The PI had no access to the videos at any time. The coaches observed classroom teachers and continued to model strategies and plan between each PD session, an average of three times per month. The coaches assessed the teachers using the SBR assessment at the end of each stage and discussed the scores for the purpose of feedback. The scores were only available to the coaches and the teachers for reflective purposes. Teachers and coaches reflected on the process and their practice in their journals. Field notes by PI contributed as rich data resources during each stage of the study.

During stage II, teacher training took place in October 2016 and included *before and after* SBR intervention activities. This session trained teachers on the infusion of art, music, movement, and other activities to immerse the classroom in SBR events with

expanded vocabulary opportunities. The coaches gave teachers ideas for activities, but encouraged them to create their own ideas based on the individual learners in their classrooms. Coaches modeled the strategy that was the focus of the stage II new PD, and encouraged teachers to implement the strategies in the classroom during planning meetings with individual teachers.

During stage III, the final training in January 2017 included *topic immersion*. This session trained teachers to use art, vocabulary, and lesson plans based on the book they shared with the class during the research study. The PI used a PowerPoint of SBR elements and questions to evoke dialogue and actions on the intervention topic.

During stage IV in the spring of 2017, the PI held a focus group to collect more data on the intervention from participants. This 60-minute session included a pre-determined protocol (see Appendix A) based on the research questions and conducted by a University of Bridgeport doctoral student. The researcher voice recorded and transcribed the focus group verbatim. Individual teacher's interviews also occurred in the spring of 2017. Each interview was 30 minutes long with pre-determined questions (see Appendix B) based on the research questions. The PI voice recorded and transcribed each interview. The graduate assistant conducted the interviews and signed a confidentiality agreement to protect the participants' identities. The use of a graduate assistant encouraged open dialogue with the participants.

Data Collection

The data came from the following sources: participating teachers' and coaches' reflective journals, interviews, focus group discussions, PI field notes, video reflections, and SBR assessment scores. Teacher participants explored SBR plans and options during

the training sessions on SBR with questions, answer, and discussion time. They had an opportunity to explore and reflect on options during coaching and feedback sessions. Transformation of teaching practices concluded based on observable behavior in the teacher participants' videotaped classroom sessions and data derived from journals, SBR assessment scores, PI field notes, interviews, and focus group discussions.

Teacher's reflective journals

The PI provided preschool teacher participants with a composition note book and pen. They journaled their reflections and perceptions of the new PD, work with their coaches, videotapes, the sharing of SBR assessment scores and practicing the SBR strategies in their classrooms. The PI explained that there was no restriction on how much they could journal or how often they could write in their journals. Each teacher participant received additional journals if they requested them. The PI collected journals after the final stage of the study for data collection and analysis.

Video reflections

Coaches videotaped preschool teacher participants at least twice during the three research cycles. The PI provided hand-held video cameras to the coaches after training them to focus the camera only on the teachers' practice during SBR strategies. The coaches did not capture any images of children in the classrooms. Teachers received the videotaped footage for reflection and journaling purposes. Then the coaches would view the videos with the preschool teacher participant to dialogue about their critical reflections. The coaches also viewed the videos when using the SBR assessment tool to identify the frequency of the SBR strategies in the classrooms. They scored the tool and

discussed the scores with the teachers for critical reflection. The PI encouraged coaches and teachers to write in the reflective journals about this experience.

SBR observation assessment tool

Pentimontia et al. (2012) created the SBR assessment tool. The PI trained the coaches during a 45-minute training to review the tool and demonstrate the 21 SBR codes separated into five categories (i.e., language development, abstract thinking, print/phonological skills, elaborations, and session climate). The coaches observed and recognized the frequency of SBR-related actions teachers performed and assigned a number code to each action in 15-second intervals over a 20-minute time period. A score of 80 or more in each of the five categories represented consistent use of SBR strategies in the classroom connected to successful teaching of preschool literacy. A score below 80 in each of the five categories represented areas that needed improvement. The coaches engaged in coaching dialogues with the preschool teacher participants about the assessment to provide effective and targeted feedback. Each coach modeled appropriate SBR-based practice and provided feedback to transform the teachers' practices related to effective elements of the intervention. The coaches and teachers journaled their reflections of this process.

Coaches' reflective journals

The educational specialists/coaches received a composition note book and pen, and journaled their reflections and perceptions when training the teacher participants in the new PD, after videotape reflections, during sharing of SBR assessment scores. and their perceptions of the new PD. The PI explained that there were no restrictions on how much they could journal or how often they could write in their reflective journals. Each

teacher participant received an additional journal if they requested it. The PI collected journals after the final stage of the study for data collection and analysis.

PI field notes

The researcher (the PI) wrote extensive field notes during the study. The PI field notes were in a composition note book and included critical reflections from the PI at the beginning, middle, and at the conclusion of the study to add to the thick rich description of the data sources.

Interviews

The teacher participants participated in interviews in the spring of 2017. Each interview lasted about 30 minutes using pre-determined questions. A CITI-certified University of Bridgeport School of Education graduate assistant conducted the interviews, and voice recorded responses were transcribed verbatim by the PI. The graduate assistant signed a confidentiality agreement.

Focus group discussions

The focus group was a 60-minute semi-structured question and answer session with teacher participants and coaches. The PI audio taped and transcribed the focus group verbatim. Prior to the focus group, the PI encouraged the graduate assistant to remind teachers and coaches to speak openly about their experiences with the new PD. After answering all of the focus group questions, the teacher participants and coaches left. The PI then transcribed the audio tape to improve validity and reliability of the data.

Triangulation is a strategy for evaluation of findings. Creswell and Miller (2000) defined triangulation as “a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (p.

126). Triangulation of multiple data sources (participants' journals, interview and focus group transcripts, video reflections, SBR scores, and PI field notes) established validity in answering the research questions. According to Maxwell (2013), triangulation "reduces bias due to a specific method of research and allows for better assessment of the generality of the explanations that one develops" (p. 128).

Data Analysis

The goal of qualitative data analysis was to uncover emerging themes, patterns, concepts, insights, and understandings (Patton, 2002). The PI coded themes in the field notes, teachers' journals, interviews, and focus groups and completed cross-comparisons of the data sources (Yin, 2009). The researcher categorized and subcategorized themes within the data sources (Saldana, 2010), and created a table including all codes from categories and subcategories for each individual case. The researcher then matched findings across the six case studies, and placed these tables alongside each other to examine for patterns or common relationships (Badara, 2011). The examination of these category/subcategory tables for cross-case relationships depended strongly on the interpretation of the data (Yin, 2009). The analysis of the seven tables enabled the researcher to draw cross-case conclusions that led to the emergence of themes. The researcher organized the cross-case analysis according to the research questions.

This study embraced "Miles and Huberman's process (1984, 1994) of cross-case analysis which consists of three concurrent flows of activities: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/ verification" (Cruzes, Dybå, Runeson, & Höst, 2014 p. 7). Data reduction is the identification of items of evidence in the primary studies. The researcher clustered data into categories and charts to draw conclusions from the

combined themes. The use of categories and charts allow for a synthesis of information across-cases (Cruzes et al., 2014). The researcher stored all data in a password protected laptop owned by the PI who will store it for at least three years. The PI will erase the data three years after the conclusion of the study.

Validity and Credibility

Throughout this study, the PI continually checked in on the participants and coaches to ensure their understanding of the study was clear and to answer any questions. Golafshani (2003) posited that “to ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial” (p. #). Seale (1999) explained that the “trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability” (p. 266). The credibility of this research relied on the ability of the participants to read and critique the codes and conclusions of their transcripts of interviews and focus groups at the end of the study to ensure that they captured the true context of the teachers’ and coaches’ recordings (member checking). Triangulation of the findings increased with the use of multiple data sources such as journals, interviews, and focus groups (Creswell, 2009). The researcher used cross-case analysis informed by Miles and Huberman (1984, 1994) to draw creditable conclusions from the data.

To ensure validity and reliability, a colleague of the PI also coded the transcripts of three of the six participating teachers and the focus group. This coding matched 75% of the themes of the PI. The process of theme matching was similar to methods suggested by Yin (2000). Patton (2002) argued that 75 to 80% agreement, or an inter-coder correlation of .70 to .80 or higher, is indicative of high reliability. The use of triangulation of the multiple data sources collected from the sources, researcher field

notes, coaches' reflective journals, teachers' journals, video reflection, SBR assessment scores, interviews, and focus groups assisted in the validity and reliability of this study.

Two coaches assessed each teacher using the SBR assessment tool, then they compared their scores and discussed them. There was a 90% match for scoring between coaches. They discussed this process with the teachers and shared the scores during their dialogue together.

The multiple sources of data provided thick, rich data for analysis. According to Denzin (1989), "thick descriptions are deep, dense, detailed accounts. Thin descriptions, by contrast, lack detail, and simply report facts" (p. 83). Thick descriptions provide information that invoke for the readers a feeling that they experienced the events in a study. Thus, researchers establish credibility through readers who read a narrative account and feel transported into a setting or situation (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 128).

During the 9 months of this study, the researcher experienced prolonged engagement with the participants that added to the validity process. Fetterman (1989) posited that "working with people day in and day out for long periods of time is what gives ethnographic research its validity and vitality" (p. 46). During repeated observations over time, the researcher built trust with participants, participants allowed access to the phenomenon of study, relationships became comfortable for providing information, and the researcher responded to study participants. This helped build a tight case for creditability (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

This research may improve the PD in preschool programs for all preschool teachers. This new approach to PD provides guidance and insight for all preschool programs who want offer PD to their teaching staff in an effort to have them transform

their practice in the classroom and improve the way they teach literacy to children. The use of multiple data sources, triangulation, and dual coding assisted in reaching validity and reliability in this study.

Limitations and Assumptions

One assumption of this study pertains to the reflective cycles and the fact that the researcher assumed videotapes would encourage participants to reflect on their own practice. Another assumption pertains to the role of coaching in changing teaching practices. The limitations of this study include the impact this researcher's position and perception as the *boss* may have had on the participants' willingness to please through participation (i.e., the social desirability factor). This is inherent in all qualitative studies in which the researcher is a participant observer. As a precaution, this researcher continually reminded the participants that the researcher was acting only as a graduate student with no administrative functions.

Other limitations included the Hawthorn effect, the alteration of behavior by the subjects of a study due to their awareness of being observed. This may arise at different times in the study, specifically during the videotaping and the coaches' observations. Another limitation of this study includes cost restrictions of hiring and training coaches, the limited availability of time during the work day for the participants to engage in journaling, and the availability of video equipment.

The ability to generalize these findings to a larger population is also a limitation of this study. The researcher conducted the study in an urban city setting that served over 600 preschool children and employed over 40 preschool teachers; only 6 teachers volunteered for this study. The small number of responders and the specific location and

demographics of the participants makes it difficult to generalize the finding to a larger population.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the effective elements of a PD program that used a transformative learning framework to motivate preschool teachers to change their classroom practice. Information extracted by scrutinizing the current literature in the field indicated that a PD intervention with a focus on SBR may improve PD for ECE teachers. By offering opportunities to early learners from urban environments for vocabulary acquisition and enhancement through the SBR teaching approach, these learners may gain literacy skills to decrease the national achievement gap between lower-income children and more affluent children. As Callaghan and Madelaine (2012) implied, PD focused on SBR can provide a meaningful approach for training preschool teachers when implemented through a transformative lens that encourages teachers to engage in deep reflection on their teaching methods. This approach may engage preschool students in productive educational experiences and develop early literacy proficiency.

This qualitative multiple case study took place in an urban preschool environment in greater Bridgeport, Connecticut. The study included six teacher participants and five coaches who worked together to apply elements of TLT, which provided data for the researcher to answer the following research questions:

1. What are preschool teachers' perceptions of this new approach to professional development?
2. How does PD implemented through a transformative learning theory influence preschool teachers' practice?

Each teacher participant received training on the new SBR PD during three sessions over a 9-month period during the 2016-2017 school year. Each participant received coaching based on the new SBR PD for at least 30 minutes after each training session and coaches assessed teachers two to three times during the 2015-2016 school year using the SBR assessment tool. They shared the scores from this tool during discussions on reflective practice. Each teacher participant had opportunities to dialogue with their coaches about their scores and experiences when implementing the PD. The PI encouraged reflection as the teachers watched themselves on video. They journaled at least once per week throughout the experience to identify any transformations in their teaching practices and the actions that led to these transformations. Each teacher engaged in three transformative learning cycles that included critical reflection on identification of a disorientating dilemma (vocabulary disparity among low-income children and their more affluent peers), dialogue (communication with the coaches), and taking action on new perspectives (transforming teaching practice via SBR strategies) (Mezirow, 1978).

Each participant experienced a unique transformation of their teaching approaches through reflection and dialogue. The opportunity to engage in deep reflective practice (journaling and video reflection) while working with a coach was an important element to the transformation of teaching methods. Teachers unanimously reported that the new PD approach could transform their teaching practices in any subject matter, not just SBR.

The findings aligned with research by Neuman and Cunningham (2009) on the impact of coaching and PD that showed coaching is more effective when combined with coursework in changing the classroom learning environment. The learning environment in the present study contained similar elements, which increased this alignment. Kraft et

al. (2016) conducted a meta-analysis of existing studies on coaching to estimate the mean effect, and showed that though there was not a major change in instruction or student achievement, coaching showed slight improvement over other methods. The present study indicated similar findings.

The researcher collected qualitative data from teacher participants' journals, coaches' journals, PI field notes, SBR assessment scores, video reflections, interviews, and a focus group. The researcher ensured study validity through data triangulation (Creswell, 2009). Cross-case analysis is a method that facilitates the comparison of events, activities, and processes across the study units; it is the analysis of two or more case studies to produce a synthesized outcome (Khan & VanWynsberghe, 2008).

During stage I and stage II of this study, the participants engaged in reflective journaling, videotape observations, and dialogue about their SBR assessment scores with their coaches. The PI took field notes throughout each stage of the research. This study is grounded in TLT, but there are five additional theories that inform this research throughout all three stages: adult learning theory, motivational theory, self-efficacy theory, social learning theory, and the theory of critical reflection. During stage III of this research study, interviews and focus group data sources triangulated to form a comprehensive justification for themes (Creswell, 2009).

Tables 2 and 3 provide details of the cross-case analysis of themes from the data sources for research questions 1 and 2. Each research question had a convergence of themes; categories describe the research question, the themes derived from teacher's interviews, focus group, and reflective journals. Coaches themes emerged from focus groups and reflective journals. Table 4 shows teachers' SBR scores.

Table 2. *Cross-Case Analysis of the Data Sources for Research Question 1*

Research Question 1.	Data Sources	Preschool Teacher Themes	Coaches Themes	PI themes
What are urban preschool teachers' perceptions of this new approach to professional development?	Interviews	Increased self-motivation, Perceived improved practice, Encouraged critical reflection Helpful	Helpful, Allowed new ideas, Perceived improved practice, Encouraged critical reflection	
	Focus Group	Increased self-motivation, Perceived improved practice, Encouraged critical reflection	Helpful, allowed new ideas, Perceived improved practice, Encourage Critical reflection, Encouraged dialogue	
	Reflective Journals	Increased self-motivation, Perceived improved practice, Encouraged critical reflection, Helpful	Helpful, Allowed new ideas, Perceived improved practice, Encouraged critical reflection, Encouraged dialogue	
	PI Field Notes			Helpful, Enjoyable, Allowed for learning opportunities, Change in practice
	Videotape Observation	Helpful, Allowed for	Helpful, Allowed for	

	critical reflection	critical reflection and dialogue
SBR Assessment Scores	Helpful, Allowed for critical reflection	Helpful, Allowed for critical reflection and dialogue

Table 3. *Cross-Case Analysis of Themes for Research Question 2*

Research Question 2.	Data Sources	Preschool Teacher Themes	Coaches Themes	PI themes
How does PD implemented through a transformative learning theoretical lens influence urban preschool teachers' practice?	Interviews	Increased self-motivation, Increased personal input, Increased enthusiasm, Perceived improved practice, Revealed self-doubt, Increased critical reflection	Critical reflection on practice, Increased dialogue opportunities, Enthusiasm, Appeared to increase motivation, Perceived improved practice	
	Focus Group	Increased self-motivation, Increased personal input, Increased enthusiasm, Perceived improved practice, Revealed self-doubt, Increased critical reflection	Critical reflection on practice, Increased dialogue opportunities, Appeared to increase motivation, Enthusiasm, Perceived improved practice	
	Reflective Journals	Increased self-motivation, Increased Personal input,	Enjoyable, effective, Reflective, Helpful	

	Increased enthusiasm, Perceived improved practice, Revealed self-doubt, Increased critical reflection	
PI Field Notes		Allowed time for critical reflection, Dialogue, Practice, Self-awareness
Videotape Observation	Creates opportunity for critical reflection, dialogue, practice, Self-awareness	Allowed for critical reflection, Dialogue, Perceived improved practice, Self-awareness
SBR Assessment Scores	Creates opportunity for critical reflection, Dialogue, Practice, Self-awareness	Allowed for critical reflection, Dialogue, Perceived improved practice, Self-awareness

Table 4. *Preschool Teacher's Average SBR Scores*

Teacher Participants	Research Cycle #1	Research Cycle #2	Research Cycle #3
Agatha SABR Constructs Abstract thinking Elaborations Print/phonological skills Session climate	40	68	80
Barbie SABR Constructs Abstract thinking Elaborations Print/phonological skills Session climate	35	58	78
Duckie SABR Constructs Abstract thinking Elaborations Print/phonological skills Session climate	25	55	80
Edward SABR Constructs Abstract thinking Elaborations Print/phonological skills Session climate	45	59	80
Jaylah SABR Constructs Abstract thinking Elaborations Print/phonological skills Session climate	15	25	45
Kory	25	58	78

SABR Constructs
Abstract thinking
Elaborations
Print/phonological
skills
Session climate

SBR Observation Assessment Tool

The PI trained the coaches on the use of the SBR observation assessment tool (Pentimontia et al., 2012). During the 45-minute training, the PI reviewed and demonstrated the use of 21 SBR codes in five categories: language development, abstract thinking, print/phonological skills, elaborations, and session climate. The five coaches used this tool to assess SBR in the teaching practices of the six teacher participants. The details of these scores appear in Table 4. The following sections of this chapter include detailed contextual information to understand these scores in the following manner for each case study: introduction, response to research question 1, response to research question 2, role of reflection, coaches' perceptions, summary, and PI perceptions. This organizational system is the same for each teacher participant.

Case 1: Agatha

Introduction

Agatha has over 17 years of preschool teaching experience, a master's degree in ECE, and a Connecticut state teaching certificate for grades K-8. She works in a classroom with 16 students between the ages of 3 and 5. She works with a teaching assistant and also has the help of a floating aide most of the time. The teaching assistants and aides assist with classroom activity set-up, clean up, and the supervision of children throughout the day. Agatha volunteered for this study and self-selected her pseudonym.

Agatha participated in PD in the past, but none were similar to the present study. The PI field notes, coaches' reflective journal, and her reflective journal indicate that she was enthusiastic about her participation in the study.

Research question 1

Agatha described the new PD as helpful. At the onset of this study, she had a child in her classroom who could not speak English. After she receiving training in the new PD and engaging the child in the SBR interventions, the child's vocabulary grew as assessed by her observations and comparison of the child's vocabulary prior to the intervention. The child's parents asked how they could engage in this practice at home. Agatha provided books in the child's native language and English along with flash cards to help the family practice at home together. Agatha described her firm belief in challenging a child to meet their full potential in preschool as a precursor to education later in life. She believed that the intervention helped improve her practice with the children and this was evident from their increased use and understanding of new vocabulary words in the classroom. The themes that emerged from this participant's data sources in response to the research question included: *increased self-motivation, perceived improved practice, encouraged critical reflection, and helpful.*

Research question 2

Data from the interview and the reflective journal indicated that when Agatha viewed the PD through the theoretical lens of transformative learning, she described herself as having a "self-directed goal to increase her research based practice in the classroom". Consistent with adult learning theory, Agatha identified with Knowles' (1980) six principles of adult learning; "adults are internally motivated and self-directed;

adults bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences, adults are goal oriented, adults are relevancy-oriented, and adults are practical. Like all learners, adult learners like to be respected” (p. 53). Her teaching principles were evident in analysis of her reflection journal and interview data. She was motivated to participate in the PD and related activities because she “really wants the children to do better.” She shared in her interview that she knew “if she got better in her teaching practice the children would do better too.” She described wanting to “get out of her shell and try something new.” She viewed this new PD as an adventure.

Agatha described her experience working with her coach as “awesome.” She experienced perceived transformational learning coupled with elements of social learning theory through her interaction with her coach. For social learning theorists, learning must take place in a social context through observation and modeling (Bandura, 1962). Agatha connected these theories with her experience throughout the study. In her journal, she feeling “shaky” at first and she “doubted” herself, but over time she became comfortable with her coach while receiving positive reinforcement and modeling. Her coach assured her that she was “already doing the intervention in class” and to “do more.”

Agatha’s transformation was evident from the themes that emerged from coding during the cross-case analysis process (see Tables 2, 3, and 4). Further evidence of transformation emerged from Agatha’s SBR assessment scores. Her scores were 40, 68, and 80, respectively, for each of the research cycles. In the first research cycle, her score of 40 indicated that she needed improvement in each of the five SBR content areas because she did not use the strategies frequently within each 15-second interval during the 20-minute observation. Her third research cycle score of 80 indicated improvement

from her second score of 68. She spent more time reflecting on her practice with the use of reflective journaling, video reflection, and dialogue with her coach, and her scores improved. These findings align with data from the focus group and interview.

Role of reflection

Agatha described being more conscious of her practice due to the video reflections, although it was not her favorite aspect of the study. She did not like seeing herself and critiquing her practice. It “made her nervous” to know people were watching, but seeing herself in action helped her reflect on how she could improve and practice her newly discovered strategies. This was evident throughout all three research cycles after the introduction of the distorting dilemma (vocabulary disparity among her low-income students and their more affluent peers). Agatha engaged in the new PD on SBR, implemented the intervention in her classroom, received coaching and dialogued with her coach, reflected on her practice with the use of journaling, and received feedback from the SBR tool. She dialogued throughout each cycle with her coach about ways to improve and implementation of these plans in the classroom. She viewed video footage of herself and again reflected on her practice with her coach and in her journal. Throughout the cycles, she changed her practice while expanding her knowledge about how SBR could benefit her students. The cycle then repeated. Her change in practice was evident in the data sources from her, the coach, and the PI.

In her interview, Agatha revealed that she felt dialogue with her coach helped transform her practice as well. They talked regularly about the PD strategies, SBR scores, and how she could reflect on her current practice to reshape future practice with the information she learned about herself. There were three cycles of this process. With each

cycle, Agatha felt as if she improved with the use of reflection of her teaching practice (Schon, 1991). Each transformative learning cycle included dialogue, critical reflection, and practice based on TLT (Mezirow, 1978).

Agatha did not like journaling, because she was “not crazy about writing.” She did see it as useful in her reflective practice. When she went back and read some of her writing, she realized she “should have and could have done more to improve her practice.” Agatha’s perception of the new PD was that it was “helpful” and should be shared with all program teachers and embedded into current PD practice to benefit children and staff. She stated, “it is a good thing, I like it” during her interview. She felt that the reflective aspect of the study was the most beneficial and the most challenging; “it is hard to look at yourself and be honest that you are not perfect” (Agatha). She vowed to continue to use the transformative theoretical framework in her classroom and train her co-workers in the SBR practice “because we have to do good work together for the kids.” The themes that emerged from this participant’s data sources included: *self-motivation, enthusiasm, perceived improved practice, self-doubt, and increased critical reflection.*

Coach’s journal perceptions

Agatha’s coach has 35 years of experience and a master’s degree in ECE. She engaged in three research cycles based on TLT with Agatha. During each cycle, the coach observed Agatha in her classroom using the SBR strategies, dialogued with her about her practice, videotaped her while using the SBR strategies, and wrote in a reflective journal. This coach trains preschool teachers regularly on literacy PD, but had never used the new PD approach. In her reflective journal and during the focus groups, she described Agatha’s enthusiasm for participating in the study. She journaled about

Agatha's self-motivation and critical reflection during their videotaping time and about her SBR assessment scores. She encouraged this practice through dialogue and practice with Agatha. She and Agatha perceived an improved change in her reaching practice after viewing the videotapes and the SBR assessment scores. During the focus group, the coach expressed that she enjoyed working with Agatha and had a lot of respect for her videotaping and SBR assessment, which they repeated three during the research cycles. The coach detailed how the teacher's practice and SBR assessment scores improved over time during the implementation of the intervention based on the TLT framework. This served as evidenced of perceived improvement in her teaching practice. By using the elements of the transformative learning framework (identifying a dilemma, critical reflection, dialogue, and taking action), the coach proclaimed that she and this teacher shared a perceived improvement in her teaching practice as it pertains to the use of SBR strategies in her classroom. The coach and the teacher agreed during the focus group that this intervention would benefit all staff throughout the program. The coach's reflective journal was a way to triangulate the teacher participant's data sources for validity.

Summary

Agatha experienced transformational learning through the use of experience, critical reflection, and dialogue (Mezirow, 1978). Agatha described this process most in her reflection journal. She discovered thorough this new PD and reflection that she can improve learning for her students. She exclaimed that she would like to see the PD expand to teach children vocabulary. She believed that the most effective elements of the PD were working with her coach, reflecting on her own practice through journaling, and video reflection while dialoguing with her coach. Agatha's SBR assessment scores were

40, 68 and 80 for each of the research cycles. Her coach agreed with her perceived improvements. Her SBR assessment scores increased over time, and she observed improvement during the videotaping of her practice.

Case 2: Barbie

Introduction

Barbie is a preschool teacher with over 5 years of experience in the classroom; she holds an associate's degree in ECE and is working towards a bachelor's degree. Barbie works in a classroom with 17 children and has an assistant who helps with daily set up, clean up, and supervision of children in the classroom. Some days, she has the help of a floating teacher's aide who supports the smooth flow of the daily routine in the classroom. She volunteered for this study and self-selected her pseudonym. Barbie shared during her interview that she participated in PD prior to the study, but none included the combined elements of this new PD.

Research question 1

Barbie looked forward to engaging in this new PD. She perceived the new PD as an "opportunity to improve her practice and the learning of the children in her classroom." She also identified with elements of adult learning theory (Knowles, 1984). During the study, she found ways to improve her practice by incorporating the revelation of her reflections into her teaching and changing her style (e.g., tone of voice, body language, use of synonyms) during SBR time. She noticed the behavior often children became less disruptive as she engaged in her improved practice. Barbie noticed that her practice improved when she prepared her lesson and reviewed her material first. She described the experience and "enjoyable" to both her and her students. She felt

encouraged by learning something new and interacting with her coach during the study. Barbie believed this new PD could be helpful and change the practice of her peers. Barbie did not spend a lot of time dialoguing with her coach. The themes that emerged from her data included: *increased self-motivation, perceived improved practice, encouraged critical reflection, and helpful.*

Research question 2

Data from Barbie's interview, focus group, and reflective journal indicated that she described herself as being self-motivated to improve her practice, which is an element of Knowles' (1980) adult learning theory. She did not spend a lot of time with her coach due to scheduling conflicts and short-staffing in her classroom. The coach guided reflective cycles by phone and during the in person. She benefitted most from her participation in video reflections that amplified the effectiveness of reflection (Schon, 1981). She realized that she already incorporated many of the strategies in her classroom to improve literacy for her class. She noticed through this element of PD that she could improve her "tone of voice and use of synonyms" during SBR time to further engage children. She journaled about making more of a conscience effort to improve while making SBR entertaining and educational. Barbie detailed her increased ability to use vocabulary throughout the day as related to SBR activities.

Vocabulary is the essence of oral language comprehension and sets the basis for knowledge and later reading comprehension (Beck & McKeown, 2007; Snow et al., 1998). She journaled as often as possible, reflecting on her daily experiences using the PD. She described that she was able to "take bits and pieces" from her journal to share with other teachers to assist them in changing their practice for SBR in the classroom.

Increasing the opportunity for dialogue led to transformation in her practice (Mezirow, 1978). Barbie noted that the PD assisted her change in practice because she “went through the actual experience, journaled about it, and at the same time reflected on what it was and what could be.” She felt better preparation for lessons and a realization that she was very good at SBR prior to taking part in the study. Now, she had a more reflective, direct approach to increasing the vocabulary of her students. The themes that emerged from this participant’s data sources included: *self-motivation, enthusiasm, perceived improved practice, increased self-efficacy, and increased critical reflection.*

Barbie described being interested in the research project from the start because she believed it could benefit her as an educator, and therefore benefit her students. She wanted to improve her SBR skills and welcomed the opportunity to participate and reflect on her practice. She did not often have this opportunity as part of her work day. Her favorite aspects of the research were the opportunity to “reflect and evolve through reflection and practice.” She enjoyed journaling and video reflection. She noted that she could not do this during the normal course of teaching, because she was short-staffed or had many children who required extra attention. She perceived that the reflective and coaching element of the new PD would benefit all of her peers. She noted improvements such as giving more access to the coach for more time together. She suggested having more than one coach to provide more opportunities for learning, and described the elements of the new PD as “enlightening.”

Barbie’s SBR assessment scores were 35, 58, and 78 for each of the research cycles. In the first research cycle, her score of 35 indicated that she needed improvement in each of the five SBR content areas because her coach did not observe her use of the

SBR strategies within each 15-second interval during the 20-minute observation. Her third research cycle score of 78 indicated improvement from her second score of 58. She spent more time reflecting on her practice through reflective journaling and video reflection, which improved her scores. Her coach agreed with her perceived improvements as evidenced by her improved SBR assessment scores, videotaping of her practice, and interview and focus group data.

Role of reflection

Barbie described her use of reflection as a means to “evolve and improve her practice.” Having the opportunity to journal, view her own practice on video, and dialogue with her coach allowed her to think about what she was doing right and encouraged her to improve her techniques. She believed that collectively sharing her experience was important. Connecting and speaking with peers and coaches was very valuable, which further validated the importance of the transformative element of dialogue. Barbie believed she “changed because she was eager and willing to learn something new in order to grow as an educator.” Barbie’s positive attitude in the classroom was also an important element of her success (Marazano, 2012).

Coach’s journal perceptions

Barbie’s coach has 10 years of experience and a master’s degree in ECE. She engaged in two research cycles based on TLT with Barbie. According to their focus group responses and Barbie’s interview, their schedules did not align to allow for three cycles; so, they only met twice. This coach attends PD often, but none of them had the combined elements of the new PD.

In her reflective journal and during the focus groups, this coach shared Barbie's excitement for participating in the study. She observed Barbie's self-motivation and ability to critically reflect on her practice during their videotaping time and during dialogue about her SBR assessment scores. The coach reported in her journal that Barbie's scores improved over time with each research cycle through critical reflection, practice, and experience. The coach wrote in her reflective journal and stated during the focus group that she encouraged critical reflection throughout the study with Barbie.

She and Barbie perceived an improved change in her reaching practice during dialogue after viewing the videotapes and the SBR assessment scores. Videotaping and the SBR assessment repeated three times during this study. The coach detailed how the teacher's practice and scores improved over time during the implementation of the intervention based on the TLT framework. By using the elements of the transformative learning framework, the coach proclaimed in her reflective journal and during the focus group that she and this teacher perceived improvement in her SBR teaching practice.

Summary

Barbie's positive perception of the PD through multiple theoretical lenses related to her opportunities to dialogue with her peers and use deep reflection before, after, and during her teaching practice (Mezirow, 1978). She perceived that the new PD increased skills and knowledge of SBR, as evidenced by the coach's perceptions during the videotaped practice, dialogue about improved SBR assessment scores, and the PI field notes. Barbie believed that her own motivation to improve and increase the knowledge of her students directly related to her success when implementing the new PD, which is consistent with elements of Knowles' (1980) adult learning theory. She believed that if

participants have more time with their coaches, they may be more successful. She believed the PD needed to include more opportunities to share experiences with the other participants. This is consistent with elements of Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. Overall, Barbie described the experience as "practice changing and rewarding".

Her coach agreed with her perceived improvements. Barbie and her coach thought that her teaching practice improved when teaching vocabulary using SBR strategies. This perception aligned with multiple data sources (i.e., videotaped observations, SBR assessment scores, interview data, focus group data, and PI field notes).

Case 3: Duckie

Introduction

Duckie has over 10 years of preschool teaching experience, and a bachelor's degree in ECE. She works in a preschool classroom with 18, 3- to 5-year old children. She has a teaching assistant and a floating aide who assist with daily set up, clean up, and supervision. She volunteered for this study and self-selected her pseudonym. Duckie participated in PD prior to volunteering for this study, but none had the combined elements of TLT as in this new PD.

Research question 1

Duckie perceived the new PD as "helpful" because she perceived a change in her practice over time due to SBR assessment scores, the critical reflection journal, and the video reflections. She did not work with her coach very often, but "it was nice to have her in the classroom." She stated that "sometimes it was difficult to implement the intervention taught in the PD because we were short staffed, in the mist of the study 23 classroom aides were laid off including one of my own," which negatively impacted the

children's engagement. "I have a lot of children with special needs in my classroom...The PD should be used throughout the program for all teachers, but staffing and timing must be right" (Duckie). It was hard to begin the SBR interventions at the beginning of the school year with new children who were young; some had no preschool experience. She stated that the journaling was helpful because "I realized what I was doing and began seeing it differently, this lead to changes and improvements in my teaching practice." Duckie did not like the video reflective practice because "it showed what I was doing wrong," but it was another opportunity to reflect on classroom practice, no matter how difficult.

Duckie's SBR assessment scores were 25, 55, and 80 for each of the research cycles. Each research cycle included: critical reflection, practice, and experience. In the first research cycle, her score of 25 indicated that she needed improvement in each of the five SBR content areas because her coach did not observe her coach using the SBR strategies within each 15-second interval during the 20-minute observation. Her third research cycle score of 80 indicated improvement from her second score of 55. She spent more time reflecting on her practice through reflective journaling, dialogue with her coach, and video reflection, which improved her scores.

Duckie perceived that the new PD influenced positive changes in her teaching practice. She changed her practice and described being given the opportunity to reflect on her practice through video and journaling as the trigger. Duckie used this new PD experience with the elements of TLT to strengthen her ability to critically reflect and improve her practice.

Research question 2

Duckie, like all of the participating preschool teachers, volunteered to participate in this study to improve her teaching practice. This is consistent with elements of adult learning theory (Knowles, 1984). She described herself as “looking forward to learning something new.” When viewing and reflecting on the new PD through theoretical lens, Duckie described enjoying the opportunity to work with a coach and reflect on her current practice to improve the way she teaches vocabulary in the classroom. Her experiences included elements of four learning theories (transformative, social, adult, and motivational). For example, she felt empowered to change her practice after she engaged in self-reflection (adult learning theory). She felt that though she “didn’t notice much modeling” from her coach, “we talked about different ways to read and get the children’s attention.” She used an element of transformative learning, dialoguing, with her coach (Mezirow, 1978).

Role of reflection

Duckie critically reflected on her practice during the intervention phase of the study by watching videotapes, participating in the interview and focus group, and journaling. She described this process as being “helpful” when journaling. She “wrote what I felt and it made me think about a little bit more what I was doing.” She disliked being videotaped “because I look fat and you saw yourself whether you like it or not, the way the children see you” (Duckie). She stated that she also saw “positives” in the video reflections in terms of motivational theory. This positive reflection may be an element of the improvement in her teaching practice. “It showed what I was doing wrong and what I could improve upon”. She did not mind journaling and going back to reflect on her writings; she described it as helpful (Schon, 1991).

Coach's journal perceptions

Duckie's coach has 15 years of experience and a master's Degree in ECE. She engaged in three research cycles based on TLT with Duckie. This coach never used the new PD approach before participating in the study. In her reflective journal and during the focus groups, she wrote that she observed Duckie's lack of motivation for participating in the study but that she was driven to participate because of her desire to help students. She observed Duckie's use of critical reflection during their videotaping time and when they dialogued about her SBR assessment scores. She viewed this as a helpful practice for Duckie, and worked with her to improve her practice through dialogue and coaching. The teacher saw little value in these strategies. The coach shared in the focus group that they both perceived an improved change in Duckie's teaching practice during dialogue after viewing videotapes and the SBR assessment scores. Both data sources indicated an observed improvement in her practice. Though Duckie did not like the videotaping element of the study, the coach shared in the focus group that this teacher did find value in this practice and the teacher agreed.

Videotaping and the SBR assessment repeated three times throughout this study. The coach detailed how the teacher's practice and SBR assessment scores improved over time during the implementation of the intervention based on the TLT framework. This served as perceived evidence of improvement triangulated with other data sources during this study. By using the elements of the transformative learning framework, the coach shared in her reflective journal and during the focus group that she and Duckie shared a perceived improvement in her teaching practice of SBR.

Summary

Duckie did not like video reflection nor did she see great value in the coaching element of the new PD. She explained in her reflective journal that she did not receive much modeling during this time with her coach. The coach did explain SBR strategies. Duckie enjoyed journaling and critically reflecting with her peers during the PD sessions. This model follows the Tinsley and Lebak (2009) plan “which allows teachers to engage in systematic, self and collaborative reflection” (p. 1).

Over time, the teachers may question their own and each other’s beliefs and assumptions. Duckie approached and sometimes achieved perspective change in her teaching practice by critiquing and challenging her pre-suppositions with the help of their peers, and with added support and guidance from this researcher, the coaches, and other professional resources. (Tinsley & Lebak, 2009, p. 3)

Duckie believed this new PD would benefit all staff with full staffing and classroom support and could ultimately improve children’s learning if implemented in her “ideal” setting. The themes from Duckies data sources included: *perceived improved practice*, *motivation to help children improve*, and *valued dialogue opportunities*.

Duckie’s SBR assessment scores were 25, 55, and 80 for each of the research cycles. Collaboratively, Duckie and her coach used dialogue and critical reflection to trigger change in her teaching practice and arrive at their shared perception of her improved practice. This aligns with data from other sources, such as the coach’s reflective journal, SBR assessment scores, PI field notes, interview, and Duckie’s reflective journal.

Case 4: Edward

Introduction

Edward has over 5 years of preschool teaching experience, and holds a bachelor's degree in ECE. He works in a classroom with 17 3- to 5-year-old children. He has a teaching assistant and a floating aide to assist in classroom activity setup, clean up, and supervision. He volunteered for this study and self-selected his pseudonym. He participated in PD prior to this study, but none included combined elements informed by the TLT framework.

Research question 1

Edward perceived the new PD to be “constructive in changing my practice”. He considered literacy and reading great topics to explore to improve teachers' skills for teaching literacy to preschoolers.

It is sad when sometimes parents are too busy to actually read to their children. If we as educators can do it here, we can be the first example and if we are consistent the children will be able to learn [...] The new PD gave me an opportunity to intentionally reflect on my practice and improve with each try [...] It was so surprising how the children adapted and improved over a period of time and so did I [...] It was a really fun experience, wonderful even, I would do it again. (Edward)

He believed the elements of the new PD triggered change in his practice through dialogue with a coach, reflective journaling, video observations, and reflection about his SBR assessment scores.

Edward's average SBR assessment scores were 45, 59, and 80 during each of the research cycles. Each research cycle included: critical reflection, practice, and experience. In the first research cycle, his score of 45 indicated that he was doing well but needed some improvement in each of the five SBR content areas. His coach did not observe his use of SBR strategies within each 15-second interval during the 20-minute observation. His third research cycle score of 80 indicated improvement from his second score of 59. He spent more time reflecting on his practice through reflective journaling, dialogue with his coach, and video reflection, which improved his scores.

Edward believed that the new PD improved his teaching practice. He taught many young children and the use of SBR interventions helped keep their attention. "They are still developing" (Edward). He felt that the elements of the new PD helped him use reflection to intentionally change and improve his practice. He believed he was successful because he had the time and support of the coach to practice the interventions. He admitted that it was difficult to implement the intervention because of the age of the children and developing maturity. Through use of tone of voice, art, music, and movement, he increased his skills to build the children's vocabularies.

Research question 2

When viewing and reflecting on the PD through the theoretical lens, Edward described his experience as affected by elements of TLT. He was self-motivated to volunteer for the study to improve his practice in the classroom (Knowles, 1984). He believed that with additional support (e.g., coaching, video reflection, SBR assessment, and reflective journaling), he could improve his teaching practice of SBR. Edward felt it was "a good opportunity because I'm a prime advocate of literacy (referring to SBR).

When kids are emerged in vocabulary, ideas and pictures it's very educational.” The elements of social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) emerged during his interaction with his coach in the classroom. This was one of the specific elements of the new PD that Edward enjoyed. He felt respected by his coach and peers. They encouraged him to try new things (Mazlow, 1973).

Role of reflection

Edward used reflection when reviewing his journal and during video reflection to transform his teaching practice. He liked journaling; “it helped me critique my own skills, I think I am a good educator but I can definitely learn a lot more” (Edward). When reviewing the journal,

I learned through this experience to take the lead of the children, it makes it more creative [...] At the same time the children are participating in the activity and reading the stuff they like, I did not teach like this in the beginning. (Edward)

The video reflection was “very interesting” (Edward).

In the beginning it was kind of “shaky,” I did not know how it was going to go. The kids were uncomfortable with the taping because I did not speak to them about it before hand. I would do this differently next time and maybe have a short lesson on what is about to happen. The children in my classroom are very young and still developing. They are still trying to get the story and stuff like that so it was an experience for us both [...] As time went on it got easier [...] The second video was much easier. Children were able to read to other children using the SBR interventions I was implementing in the classroom...When I went back and watched the video and discussed it with my coach I noticed I did movement with

my body language that represented different characters and stuff like that, the children were engaged and learning.

Themes from Edward's data sources included: *self-motivation, enthusiasm, perceived improved practice, and perceived improved self-efficacy.*

Coach's journal perceptions

Edward's coach has 8 years of experience and a bachelor's degree in ECE. She also coached Kory. She engaged in three research cycles based on TLT with Edward. This coach never used the new PD approach prior to the study, but was familiar with some of its elements: critical reflection and coaching. In her reflective journal and during the focus groups, she agreed that Edward's motivation for participating in the study was for self-improvement in his everyday practice. She observed Edward's self-motivation and critical reflection during their videotaping time and dialogue about her SBR assessment scores. She and Edward perceived an improved change in his teaching practice during dialogue after viewing the videotapes and the SBR assessment scores. During the focus group, the coach described encouraging Edward to "think outside the box" when using SBR strategies to trigger change in his practice. She regularly congratulated him on his resourcefulness and new ideas.

Videotaping and SBR assessment repeated three times throughout this study; the coach and teacher experienced conflicts in their schedules. The coach detailed how the teacher's practice and scores improved over time during the implementation of the intervention based on the TLT framework. This served as evidence of perceived improvement triangulated with multiple other data sources from multiple participants. By using the elements of the transformative learning framework, the coach proclaimed in her

reflective journal and during the focus group that she and Edward shared a perceived improvement in his teaching practice of SBR.

Summary

Edward described his experience with the new PD as “constructive in changing my practice.” He believed that participating in this study allowed him to reflect on his teaching practice with the support of a coach, the use of journaling, video reflection, and dialoguing regularly with his peers to improve his practice (Mezirow, 1978). Edward felt that the children in his classroom learned more during the course of this study. He happily said, “I would do it again” during his interview. He proudly stated that he will “continue to use the intervention in his classroom beyond the conclusion of this study”. The themes that emerged from multiple data sources collected from Edward included: *self-motivation*, *perceived improved teaching practice*, and *perceived improved self-efficacy*.

Edward’s average SBR assessment scores were 45, 59, and 80 during each of the research cycles. His coach echoed his perceptions about the change in his practice. Both the coach and the teacher’s perceptions aligned with multiple data sources from multiple participants. A collective analysis of data established the theme of *positive perception*.

Case 5: Jaylah

Introduction

Jaylah has over 5 years of preschool teaching experience, and holds a bachelor’s degree in ECE. She works in a classroom with 18 children between the ages of 3 and 5 years old. She has a teaching assistant and a floating aide who help with set up, clean up, and supervision. She volunteered for this study and self-selected her pseudonym. Jaylah

attended several forms of PD over the years, but none similar to this new PD based on the TLT framework.

Research question 1

Jaylah perceived the new PD as a “practice changing experience.” She is now “more aware and open to the children’s cues, because you have to follow their cues. This might mean changing the activity or something” (Jaylah). This change was due to critical reflection journaling, dialogue with her coach, and video reflection. Jaylah journaled that the new PD was helpful in changing her practice because when she “sat and reflected on her practice,” she realized what she could do better and then changed her actions. Her experience with journaling was “good,” but the video reflections were “not very good” (Jaylah). She stated in her interview,

[...] children were not cooperative; they were not tuned into what I was doing. I have a lot of young preschoolers in their early 3s. They are not able to sit for too long. But while watching the video and discussing it with my coach I saw where I went wrong. So I changed my strategy. Instead of reading I used the felt board that had characters and talked about the story. This helped engage them. (Jaylah)

She expressed difficulty in consistently using the strategies in her classroom.

Jaylah’s average SBR assessment scores were 15, 25, and 45 during each of the research cycles. Each research cycle included: critical reflection, practice, and experience. In the first research cycle, her score of 15 indicated that she needed improvement in each of the five SBR content areas because her coach did not observe her use of SBR strategies within each 15-second interval during the 20-minute observation. Her third research cycle score of 45 indicated improvement from her second score of 25.

She spent more time reflecting on her practice via reflective journaling, dialogue with her coach, and video reflection, which improved her scores.

Jaylah believed that the new PD had a positive influence on her teaching practice. She felt that the reflective opportunities, encouragement, and dialogue with her coach helped her change her approach to teaching vocabulary to the children in her classroom. The video reflection helped her understand and help younger children struggling to sit still for an entire story. With each transformative learning cycle, she changed her SBR time with the younger children as a result of watching herself using a story board instead of a book. She became more children-focused in her practice as a result of the new PD. Elements of motivation theory played an important role in Jaylah's transformation (Maslow, 1943).

Research question 2

When viewing and reflecting on the PD through the theoretical lens, Jaylah described her experience as "helpful." She shared during her interview that she volunteered for the study to improve her teaching practice with the hope of improving children's learning in her classroom. She believed that if she improved, the children would learn more. She was self-motivated to change her practice and excited about the opportunity. Her perceived change aligned with social learning theory and TLT when she engaged with her coach in classroom modeling and dialogue about video reflection and SBR assessment scores. Throughout the reflective cycles, she identified her own areas of improvement to transform her practice (Schon, 1991). Her coach's reported perceptions and other data sources from multiple participants confirmed her change in practice.

Role of reflection

Jaylah used reflection to “look back on what I did and then went into my thoughts of what could I have done better? What could I have changed? That’s how it helped me to change.” Jaylah embraced Schon’s (1991) assumptions about reflection, which led to change for this participant. She practiced most reflection through journaling and video reflections. She felt that reflection played a major part in her ability to critically look at herself, identify areas of improvement, and change.

Coach’s journal perceptions

Jaylah’s coach has 10 years of experience and a bachelor’s degree in ECE. She was also a coach to Duckie, because there were six teacher participants and only five coaches. This coach volunteered to work with both Duckie and Jaylah because their classrooms were next door to each other and she had easy access to both teachers. She engaged in three research cycles based on TLT with Jaylah. This coach never used the new PD approach prior to the study. In this coach’s reflective journal and during the focus groups, she noted Jaylah’s enthusiasm for participating in the study and observed Jaylah’s self-motivation and her ability to critically reflect during their videotaping time and dialogue about SBR assessment scores.

Jaylah did not like reflective journaling or videotape reflections, but her coach encouraged this practice through dialogue and modeling to observe if Jaylah’s practice improved when using the SBR strategies. She and Jaylah perceived an improved change in her teaching practice after viewing the videotapes and the SBR assessment scores. Videotaping and SBR assessment repeated three times throughout this study. The coach detailed how Jaylah’s practice and scores improved over time during the implementation of the intervention based on the TLT framework even though Jaylah did not like

videotaped observations. By using the elements of the transformative learning framework, the coach proclaimed in her reflective journal and during the focus group that she and Jaylah shared a perceived improvement in her teaching practice of SBR. The information from multiple participants and data sources triangulated to confirm these findings, which increased the validity of this study (Creswell, 2009).

Summary

Though Jaylah was not fond of the video reflection element of the new PD, she found some value in it as an opportunity to reflect on her practice. According to her data sources, the two most helpful elements of TLT were dialoguing with her coach and the use of critical reflection. Jaylah described this new PD experience as “helpful.” She believed it would benefit all teachers in the program because they could all get the “same benefit” as she did. Jaylah believed the new PD helped her to improve her teaching practice; she displayed a high sense of self-efficacy at the conclusion of this study. According to Shaughnessy (2004), teachers who establish high goals, try hard, and change non-working strategies (i.e., have a high sense of efficacy) are more likely to have students with successful learning outcomes. Jaylah’s descriptions of her experience in her reflective journal, interview, and focus group were consistent with Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy theory. The themes from Jaylah’s data included: *self-motivation*, *perceived improvement in teaching practice*, and *improved perceived self-efficacy*.

Jaylah’s average SBR assessment scores were 15, 25, and 45 during each of the research cycles. Jaylah’s coach echoed her perceptions about the change in her practice. Both the coach and the teacher’s perceptions aligned through triangulation with data

sources from multiple participants. A collective analysis of the data sources established the theme of *positive perception* in Jaylah's experience of the new PD.

Case 6: Kory

Introduction

Kory has over 10 years of preschool teaching experience, and holds a bachelor's degree in ECE. She works in a classroom with 18 children between the ages of 3 and 5 years old. She has a teaching assistant and a floating aide who assist with set up, clean-up, and supervision. She volunteered for this study and self-selected her pseudonym. This teacher participant never attended a PD that was similar to this new PD based on the TLT framework.

Research question 1

Kory perceived the new PD as helpful but challenging to implement because she had many children in her classroom that were not developmentally ready for the SBR strategies at the onset of the study. She reflected in her journal that introduction of the concept later in the program year would be more successful. She struggled with the use of some of the strategies because she shares her classroom space with an afterschool program. She explained that if she were to merge her classroom into a book theme, it would have to come down each day or risk being destroyed by the afterschool program children. Packing up items at the end of each day and not having items on the walls are rules that Kory must follow. Kory believed the new PD was beneficial to her and her students, because it allowed her to critically reflect on her practice and improve.

Kory's average SBR assessment scores were 25, 58, and 78 during each of the research cycles. Each research cycle included: critical reflection, practice, and experience. In the first research cycle, her score of 25 indicated that she needed improvement in each of the five SBR content areas because her coach did not observe her use of SBR strategies within each 15-second interval during the 20-minute observation. Her third research cycle score of 78 indicated improvement from her second score of 58. She spent more time reflecting on her practice via reflective journaling, dialogue with her coach, and video reflection, which improved her scores.

Kory believed the new PD had a positive influence on her teaching practice. She "loved it" (Kory). Though her children were not "academically ready for SBR," she learned how to adjust her practice for younger children (Kory). She admitted that the beginning of the year was a difficult time to implement the strategies for SBR. Kory stated in her interview that she learned to "wait until they were ready to just understand the basics of preschool, I had to make it easier for them to understand." During the study, she realized it is "ok, they will get it" and she has "seen strides since January or February so it took longer for me to adjust to the children's style of learning, but their happy and they're great, and that's what matters" (Kory).

Research question 2

When viewing the PD through a theoretical lens, Kory perceived that the elements of the new PD helped her improve her practice (Mezirow, 1978). She was self-motivated to join the study to improve her practice and increase learning of her students. She enjoyed her interactions with the coach as she modeled the strategies in her classroom and they dialogued about them. She believed that this was a key factor to her success. She

felt as if they were partners in the process to help each other succeed. Kory believed that dialogue, critical reflection, and implementing her plan to change (all elements of TLT) improved her teaching practice (Mezirow, 1978).

Role of reflection

Kory used journaling as a reflective practice during this study. She struggled with “writing too much” or “too little” (Kory). She came to several realizations about herself and her practice during this process, and believed she let her children lead in the classroom. She realized that with a younger population in her classroom, she needed to take the lead sometimes. Kory was “not a fan” of the video reflections.

It felt odd to see myself on camera and because of being on camera I think I held back a bit with regards to being funny. I normally joke with my kids, but I knew I was being videotaped and it felt weird. (Kory)

Ultimately, Kory identified a need to slow down when reading or making a reference to something in the book and to not rush through the story when some children do not understand the concept. She realized that children became frustrated when some do not understand. She changed her practice by telling students that “they will get it, just keep doing it again and again and they will get it” (Kory).

Coach’s journal perceptions

Kory’s coach has 10 years of experience and a master’s degree in ECE. She engaged in three research cycles based on TLT with Kory. This coach never used the new PD approach prior to the study. In her reflective journal and during the focus groups, she described Kory’s enthusiasm for participating in the study. She observed Kory’s self-motivation and critical reflection during their videotaping time and dialogue time when

they discussed her SBR assessment scores. She encouraged Kory to continue this critical reflective practice through journaling even though Kory did not enjoy the journaling process. She and Kory perceived an improved change in her teaching practice during dialogue after viewing the videotapes and the SBR assessment scores. Videotaping and SBR assessment repeated three times throughout this study. By using the elements of the transformative learning framework, the coach detailed in her reflective journal and during the focus group that she and Kory shared a perceived improvement in her teaching practice of SBR.

Summary

Kory experienced change and improvement in her teaching practice through the reflective process. She struggled to implement SBR strategies due to the young ages of the children in her classroom. As the study progressed, she became more self-reflective and changed her teaching approach to fit her students. She let the children lead the lessons. She did not like the video reflections, but observed her own practice and changed by slowing down her reading strategies. She did not mention much interaction with her coach as there were some scheduling conflicts during the study.

Kory's average SBR assessment scores were 25, 58, and 78 during each of the research cycles. Each research cycle included: critical reflection, practice, and experience. Kory's coach wrote of scheduling conflicts during the study, but they were able to complete three research cycles. Kory's coach echoed her perceptions about the change in her practice. Both the coach and Kory's perceptions aligned with data sources from multiple participants to establish a theme of *positive perception*.

Principal Investigator Perceptions

As the principle investigator in this study, I collected field notes during stages I through III. These field notes contained my critical reflection of the elements of the new PD and my perceptions of the participant teachers and coaches during the study. During stage I, I perceived all of the participants to be enthusiastic and motivated to participate in the study. This aligned with data from reflection journals, interviews, and the focus group with the participants. The teacher participants felt motivated by their perceived ability to improve student learning through SBR in the new PD. Both the coaches and the teachers in the focus group discussed the time of implementation as being problematic in the beginning of the school year. I also observed this problem because of the transition of new children into classrooms at different learning levels. Participants suggested a spring implementation instead of a fall implementation to allow children to acclimate to the classroom. The coaches discussed the idea of scale in the focus group; the current program had few coaches available to take time for quality dialogue. This would be difficult for a large program, but could be possible with more coaches. Both coaches and teachers thought elements of the new PD using TLT and the SBR intervention would benefit the entire program and all teaching staff. I perceived a positive change for both the coaches and the teacher participants' practice in the focus groups, interviews, reflection journals, and PI field notes. I conducted a cross-case analysis of the multiple data sources to triangulate the findings to increase validity.

Cross-case Analysis

Introduction

The goal of qualitative data analysis in this research study was to uncover emerging themes, patterns, concepts, insights, and understandings (Patton, 2002). Coding

of themes in the PI field notes, teachers' journals, SBR assessment scores, video reflections, interviews, and focus groups informed the cross-case analysis (Yin, 2009). Within each case study, the researcher categorized themes from the data sources (Saldana, 2010), and created a table of all codes from categories and subcategories for each individual case to match common terms across the six case studies (Badara, 2011). The examination of these category/subcategory tables for cross-case relationships enabled the researcher to draw conclusions that led to the emergence of themes that aligned with the research questions.

The researcher collected several data sources: teachers' and coaches' reflective journals, interview transcripts, focus group transcripts, video reflections, SBR assessment scores, and PI field notes. According to Creswell (2009), data analysis involves collecting data by asking general questions and developing an analysis from the participants' responses. This involves continual reflection about the data and making interpretations along the way. This researcher regularly reflected on field notes and observed the teachers and the coaches during the SBR PD session. After transcribing the interview and focus group data, this researcher returned it to the teacher participants and coaches to ensure it accurately reflected their ideas for member checking to add validity to the study (Creswell, 2009).

This researcher also analyzed the data based on the major elements of the TLT framework which include the identification of the distorting dilemma, dialoguing with the participants, critically reflecting on all of the data sources that were collected, and acting on the newly discovered knowledge (change). After coding the data for themes, the researcher found interrelating themes to interpret for the meanings in relation to the

theoretical framework in an effort to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2009).

Creswell (2009) described six steps of qualitative data analysis:

1. Organize and prepare the data for analysis.
2. Read through all the data.
3. Begin detailed analysis with the coding process.
4. Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis.
5. Advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative.
6. Interpret the data.

The themes aligned with the elements of TLT, which included identifying a distorting dilemma (disparity in poor children's vocabulary), dialogue, critical reflection, and implementing a planned change in practice. Table 5 includes the emergent themes for the case studies.

Table 5. *Emergent Themes from the Case Studies*

<p>Research Question 1. What are urban preschool teachers' perceptions of this new approach to professional development?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoyable • Interesting • Would like to see it widely implemented • Participants wanted more time with coaches • Difficult to implement strategies at the onset of the school year • Difficult to implement SBR strategies with younger children • Difficult to schedule coaching when classroom staffing is low • Facilitated opportunity to dialogue with peers • Critical reflective journaling and video reflections perceived to trigger transformation • Teachers felt successful when using the interventions • Teachers believed that the elements of the new PD triggered change in their practice • Teachers believed they would continue to use the strategies after the study ended • Teachers believed students improved their acquisition of vocabulary with the SBR interventions
<p>Research Question 2. How does PD implemented through a transformative learning theoretical lens influence urban preschool teachers' practice?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived improved self-motivation • Enjoyment of implementation • Perceived respect by coaches • Empowered by coaches • Teachers took personal ownership for improvements • Perceived improvement by all participants evidenced by data source triangulation

Role of Reflection

- Critical reflective journaling facilitated deep self-reflection
 - Critical reflective journaling was time consuming
 - Journaling triggered perceived change in practice
 - Uncomfortable with video reflections
 - Video reflection perceived to trigger critical reflection and led to a change in practice
 - Video reflection built confidence in practice over time
 - Dialoguing with coach triggered reflection
 - Dialoguing with coach facilitated actions related to a positive change in teaching practices
 - Dialoguing with coach encouraged reflective practices throughout the study
-

When coding the multiple data sources (reflective journals, interviews, focus groups, PI field notes, video observations, SBR assessment scores) for similar themes, all six preschool teacher participants described themselves as self-motivated to improve teaching practice. This was their reason to participate in the study, which supports adult motivation theory and elements of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1962). For example, Agatha wanted to use more research-based approaches in her classroom to find a “what works” with her students via TLT, mainly critical reflection (Mezirow, 1978). The reoccurring theme of personal buy-in related to adult learning theory and motivational theory. Adult learning theory posits that adults need to be a part of their learning (Knowles, 1984),

Motivational theory connects to self-actualization, when teachers believe they can achieve their goals. All six teacher participants expressed this theme in their reflection journals, interviews, and focus group. Four of the six participants enjoyed working with coaches; they felt respected and empowered to change with the support of the coach. They described barriers to maximizing their time with their coach, but expressed that this was a good experience that added value to the new PD. All six teacher participants enjoyed implementing the intervention in their own classrooms. When the teachers worked in their own classrooms, they experienced a higher level of control over the use of the intervention and the intended outcome of student success over time. For example, Kory described a positive change in her students in “January or February” as measured by their increased use of more new vocabulary words. The study began in August of the past year.

Most participants reported that working with coaches was like “they were partnered with coaches for success”. Participants felt respected by coaches, and teachers took personal ownership for improvements when working with their coach. According to adult learning theorists, adult learners value a sense of equality between instructor and student, and prefer collaborative and problem-based approaches to strict, didactic learning (Thomas et al., 2007). This was true throughout this study, which improved participants’ relationships with coaches. The preschool teachers believed they transformed through multiple cycles of reflection, dialogue, and action; the data confirmed these findings.

Role of reflection

Reflection and dialogue played essential roles in this study because they are major elements of TLT, which was the framework of the study. Reflective practice involves using information from a former experience or practice to improve future practice for learners who have: (a) interest in finding the problem and the solution; (b) ability to make judgments about actions in a particular situation; and (c) the necessity of action to complete the reflective practice (Schon, 1991). As such, this researcher found that reflection and dialogue trigger perceived transformative learning and lead to perceived improved teaching practices that may result in better learning outcomes for preschool students. The three reflective cycles in this study included: experience, practice, and reflection with intent of leading to transformative learning for the teacher participants.

According to Mezirow (1997), key components of transformative learning include: “self-examination of one’s assumptions” (reflection), “exploration of options for new roles and new action,” “acquisition of new knowledge and skills,” “trying out the new role and new action,” and “building confidence within the new role” (p. 8). When coding the multiple data sources (journals, interviews, focus groups, PI field notes, video reflections, and SBR assessment scores) for similar themes, the researcher found that the role of reflection was to trigger change for the participants of this study. The participants described journaling that facilitated deep self-reflection before, during, and at the conclusion of each PD session, and again when they interacted with their coaches after being videotaped and reflecting on their practice. They described journaling as time consuming, but also as a good way to reflect because the teachers found themselves making time to journal. The participants believed that reflecting on their writing triggered perceived change in their teaching practice. All of the teachers were uncomfortable with

video reflections at first, but became comfortable over time and believed that video reflection also triggered change in their teaching practice after they viewed the footage and dialogued with their coaches. Both teachers and coaches believed video reflection helped build confidence in teaching practice; journaling and video reflection triggered critical analysis of their practice. Teachers, coaches, and this PI believed that dialoguing with the coach facilitated actions related to a perceived positive change in teaching practices as evidenced in data from the focus group, interviews, and reflection journals. Dialoguing with the coaches encouraged reflective practices throughout the study. For example, Agatha described time spent with her coach as “amazing.”

Perceptions of new PD

While addressing the research questions with a cross-case analysis of all of the data sources, the following themes emerged: *enjoyable*, *interesting*, and *triggering a perceived change in practice* as it pertained to the second research question. Both the teachers and coaches expressed that they would like all staff to receive the new PD. Teacher participants wanted more time with coaches and expressed that it was difficult to implement strategies at the onset of the school year. The teachers believed that it was difficult to implement SBR strategies with younger children due to their level of cognitive development. Teachers, coaches, and the PI expressed that it was difficult to schedule coaching when classroom staffing was low; this made implementation difficult as well. All of the participants enjoyed the opportunity to dialogue with peers during the new PD sessions and believed journaling and video reflections triggered transformation in their teaching practices.

The teachers described feeling perceived success when using the interventions. Coaches echoed this point in their reflective journals and focus group. The cross-case analysis supported that the participants believed that the elements of the new PD, reflective journaling, coaching (practice), video-reflection, and dialogue triggered perceived change in their practice. The teachers, coaches, and this PI believed that the teacher participants would continue to use the strategies after the study ended. Finally, the teachers believed students improved their acquisition of vocabulary with the SBR interventions. For example, Agatha shared that she had a child in her classroom who could not speak English at the beginning of this study. After engaging the child in the SBR interventions, the child's vocabulary grew and his parents asked how they could engage in this practice. Agatha believed that the intervention helped her improve her practice with the children. This was evident from their increased use and understanding of new vocabulary words in the classroom. Her coach critically reflected in her journal and reported this same example.

The researcher coded evidence of change in the teachers' practice in the coaches' journals and the increasing SBR scores on the assessments over time. All of the coaches wrote of a perceived improvement of the teachers' practice when using the SBR strategies in their classrooms. The coaches also referenced a perceived improvement in the children's interest in the SBR activities, evidenced by their observations.

Perceived influence on teaching practices

The cross-case analysis of the multiple data sources revealed that journaling, coaching, and video reflections triggered a perceived transformation of teaching practices. This relationship was evident in the coaches' observations and the SBR

assessment scores. Teachers and coaches described in their reflective journals that they felt successful when using the interventions, and the teachers believed that the elements of the new PD triggered perceived change in their practice. They self-evaluated their level of success through observation and reflection; students used more vocabulary words related to the intervention and the coaches' SBR assessment scores increased. All of the coaches reported an improvement in SBR scores over time with the use of the new PD. Teachers and coaches believed that they acquired knowledge about themselves and their teaching practice during this study. This acquisition of new knowledge and changed practice improved their students' vocabulary words (Mezirow, 1978).

Summary

This cross-case analysis revealed themes that suggest participants felt that the study was a valuable experience. They believed that all teaching staff should receive the new PD. The data supported that the participants believed the trainings should begin in the spring, not the fall, to ease the transition for new students. The teacher participants found it difficult to implement the new intervention with children they did not know. The participants perceived a transformation in their teaching practice triggered by the new PD as indicated by their increased knowledge of SBR strategies and students' increased use of vocabulary words. Overall, the cross-case analysis supported that the new PD using the elements of TLT facilitated change in the participants' teaching practice of SBR strategies. The participants believed that after implementation of the SBR strategies learned through this new PD, students improved their vocabulary acquisition as indicated by the participating preschool teachers' observations and comparison to students' vocabulary use prior to the intervention.

Discussion

During this study, six teachers received training in the new PD on SBR, received coaching and assessment using the SBR assessment tool, dialogued with their coaches about their scores and experiences when implementing the PD, watched themselves on video for reflection, and journaled to identify transformations in their teaching practices. Each participant experienced transformation through reflection during this research, as the cross-case analysis of the data revealed. The opportunity to engage in deep reflective practice (journaling and video reflection) while working with a coach was an important element of transformation that improved preschool teachers' practices and led to improved acquisition of vocabulary for poor preschool children. The participants agreed that this new PD can transform practice in any subject matter, not just SBR.

According to Barnett (2003), well-prepared and well-trained teachers are especially necessary in urban schools; they have less access to high-quality teachers though they may benefit the most from high teacher quality. A preschool teacher's ability to improve literacy is a key component to improving the ECE experience of underprivileged children. As Dickinson and Smith (1994) stated "a quality preschool experience can accelerate young children's vocabulary, and extend their oral language throughout their educational journey" (p. 108). Therefore, training and PD for all preschool teachers, especially urban teachers, in early literacy education is essential. The success of poor children's early educational experiences depends on the skill level and knowledge of their preschool teachers. Improved, effective PD for preschool teachers may maximize the successful learning opportunities of poor children.

The cross-case analysis of the data sources in this study support that the new PD viewed through the lens TLT (Mezirow, 1997) facilitated change in the participants' teaching practice when using SBR strategies in the classroom. The implementation of the SBR strategies learned through this new PD improved students' vocabulary acquisition. The new PD may be transferable to other training topics according to data from the coaches' focus group transcripts, reflective journals, and the PI in field notes.

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the operative elements of PD that transform teaching practices by motivating urban preschool teachers to use SBR strategies to promote early literacy for their students. These elements included: critical reflection through journaling, video observation, and dialogue with coaches who modeled the intervention. According to Callaghan and Madelaine (2012), SBR strategies strengthen oral language development in young children. PD in SBR may improve preschool teachers' literacy practice in the classroom to meet the challenge of growing accountability in the field of ECE.

Neuman and Cunningham's (2009) study on the "impact of coaching and professional development on teaching early language and literacy" discussed the importance of coaching to learning outcomes for students (p. #). To be an effective teacher, the educator needs substantial knowledge of child development and the skills necessary for "individualizing learning experiences and engaging children" (Neuman & Cunningham, 2009, p. 542). Coaching and relevant coursework in child development, child psychology, and early literacy classes may be good investments for early childhood PD. The current cross-case analysis of the data did not demonstrate that coaching and

coursework were strong components of perceived success of the teachers, because it was inconsistent.

Similarly, Dail and McGee (2011) demonstrated the effectiveness of PD while teaching literacy to preschoolers; children from urban, lower-income families had notable learning delays, especially in vocabulary acquisition and oral language skills. The most useful and productive PD approaches facilitate an increase in preschoolers' vocabulary and literacy skills. The approaches included: modeling teaching strategies, demonstrations of lesson plans by experts in the field, and coaching/mentoring partnerships for best practices (Dail & McGee, 2011). This researcher included basic elements from these similar studies and enhanced the new PD with elements of TLT such as changing your mind, challenging your belief systems, and changing your behavior through communication and reflection with the use of reflective journaling, video reflection, coaching, and dialogue (Mezirow, 1997). The researcher confirmed the success of the new PD via data that supported participants' teaching practice improvement and better acquisition of vocabulary for children in their classrooms.

There are limitations to this study, such as the Hawthorn effect, cost restrictions of hiring and training coaches, the availability of time for the participants to engage in journaling, availability of video equipment, and the ability to generalize these findings to a larger population. However, this researcher believes with additional duplications of this study and thoughtful resolutions to the other limitations, the findings may be useful in other settings for preschool teachers. These resolutions may include seeking grant funds to train existing staff as coaches and purchase materials or video recording equipment for

reflective purposes. Partnering with school districts, local universities, and stakeholders to share resources and facilitate data collection would be ideal.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

This qualitative multiple case study included six teacher participants and five coaches. Multiple data sources from teachers, coaches, and field notes from the PI informed answers to the research questions through triangulation of the data. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are preschool teachers' perceptions of this new approach to professional development?
2. How does PD implemented through a transformative learning theory influence preschool teachers' practice?

By using the elements of the transformative learning framework in a new PD (i.e., identifying a distorting dilemma, critical reflection, dialogue, and taking action on newly found perspectives), the participants perceived improvements in their teaching practice that may lead to increasing poor children's vocabulary. This improved ECE may narrow the achievement gap between these students and their more affluent peers.

This study revealed themes that support that the participants felt the study was a valuable experience and that preschools should widely implement the new PD for all teaching staff. The data sources (reflective journals, interviews, focus groups, video reflections, and SBR assessment scores) triangulated to support the participants' beliefs that the trainings should begin in the spring, not fall, and that the new PD transformed teachers' practice. This cross-case analysis included teacher participants' and coaches' reflective journals, interviews, focus group, PI field notes, SBR assessment scores, and video reflections. Findings support the notion that the new PD viewed through elements of TLT (Mezirow, 1997) facilitated change in the participants' teaching practice when

using SBR strategies in the classroom. Throughout this research, several other learning theories reflected the findings despite the emphasis on a transformative learning framework. The remainder of Chapter 5 includes a discussion of these theories.

Adult Learning Theory

The PD aspect of this study incorporated theoretical frameworks of adult learning theories. Adults have specific needs and requirements as learners (Knowles, 1980; Knowles, Swanson, & Holton, 2005; Lieb, 1991). Adult learners value equality between professors and students in a collaborative, problem-based educational environment (Thomas et al., 2007).

Knowles (1980) identified six principles of adult learning: “adults are internally motivated and self-directed; adults bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences, adults are goal oriented, adults are relevancy-oriented, and adults are practical. Like all learners, adult learners like to be respected” (p. 53). PD facilitators should apply these principles to be successful in educating adults. Since the PD program in this study is for adult learners, it included all six principles outlined by Knowles (1980) to construct an effective learning experience for the teacher participants.

Adult learners come to PD programs with a wealth of prior experiences and knowledge (Merriam & Caffarella, 2001; Silberman & Auerbach, 1998). When adults’ prior life experiences and new knowledge connect, they apply new knowledge to their work to create real change (i.e., transformative learning) (Brookfield, 1986; Jarvis, 1987; Kolb, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978). Lewin (1951) stressed the importance of knowledge application in the work place by emphasizing that “learners must interact with the new

knowledge in a familiar environmental setting” (p. 197). This is exactly how the researcher structured the PD program for the teacher participants in this study.

Teacher participants tapped into their prior classroom experiences and watched themselves in action in the present. Each participant had over 5 years of urban preschool classroom teaching experience. They taught while being videotaped, and participated in a collaborative, problem-based discussion with their coaches about key aspects of best teaching practices. These practical and relevancy-oriented discussions incorporated into the PD training with the SBR approach to literacy education. Triangulation of multiple data sources validated that the life experiences and work-related activities of the teacher participants played a large role in answering the research questions in this study.

Connecting this theory to the research design, the preschool teachers engaged in relevant processes to explore and discover personal and professional information and experiences with TLT as a framework for the new PD. According to Tinsley and Lebak (2009), transformative learning occurs when “teachers engage in self-reflection and question their own beliefs and assumptions” about their teaching practice (p. 2). By encouraging honest self-reflection about their teaching methodology through the PD program, the teacher participants changed (transformed) their classroom practice for the better.

Adult learning theory intertwined with the elements of transformative learning in this study. This merging of theory facilitated change in the participants’ teaching practice when using SBR strategies in the classroom as evidenced by the cross-case analysis. The researcher validated these findings through triangulation of multiple data sources from several participants.

Motivational Theory

Motivational theory (Maslow, 1943) played an important role in the process of transformational learning in this study. To promote change, this researcher identified various reasons teacher participants must change their classroom practice. The researcher considered the following questions:

1. Are the teacher participants motivated to change as a result of their social needs, that is; a desire to conform to the expectations of the coach's goals in the study?
2. Are they more likely to change due to their desire to see themselves as effective teachers and succeed in the classroom?

The importance of motivational theory in this study related to the teachers' desire to change their behavior in the classroom through elements of transformative learning in the new PD to improve teaching techniques. The intentional dialogue between each teacher and coach included critical reflection to change their practice.

Another motivational theory in the present study was Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory. Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, Peetsma, and Geijssel (2011) found that a perceived sense of self-efficacy influences teachers. Self-efficacy is "a belief in one's ability to succeed in a specific situation, and accomplish a task effectively" (Bandura, 1994, p. 72). According to Bandura (1994), "the most effective way of creating a strong sense of efficacy is through mastery learning and experiences" (p. 73). Thoonen et al. (2011) found that teachers' personal efficacy was the most important aspect of motivation that contributed to change in skills and learning. When the teacher participant perceived themselves as implementing the SBR intervention successfully, it positively affected the

teacher's sense of personal efficacy. This finding aligns with evidence from multiple data sources: reflective journals from teacher participants and coaches, interviews, focus group, PI field notes, reflective video observations, and SBR assessment scores.

The coach as an agent of transformative change acts as a transforming facilitator. As Burns (1978) stated, "Transforming leadership redesigns perceptions and values" and "turns followers into leaders by working collectively with the learner" (p. 46). The coaches in this study encouraged teachers to facilitate positive changes in their teaching practice. The cross-case analysis of participants data revealed that critical reflection triggered more transformative learning than coaching.

This researcher encouraged meaningful teacher-coach participation to strengthen motivation by including training, on-going support from coaches, administration support, and control over implementation of the SBR PD intervention. Teachers may not maintain permanent changes in behavior unless they make a *personal choice* to change due to their own *self-direction* (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to Turnbull (2002), teachers are more likely to commit to a transformative change of practice if they receive specific training and on-going support and have control over classroom implementation. All of these conditions informed creation of the new PD in this study.

Social Learning Theory

Another major theoretical perspective within this study was Bandura's (1962) social learning theory. People learn skills by observing others performing those skills. Learning must take place in a social context through observation and modeling (Bandura, 1962). As Bandura (1977) stated, "seeing others perform unfamiliar, and maybe, even threatening activities without adverse consequences can generate expectations in

observers that they too can improve if they intensify and persist in their efforts” (p. 197). This researcher facilitated transformation of preschool teacher participants’ classroom practice by using skilled coaches as “role models to observe and imitate” (Bandura, 1962, p. #). The coaches in this study modeled SBR strategies while building relationships with the teacher participants. Through observational learning, teacher participants experienced transformative change in their teaching practice. The cross-case analysis’ converging themes included data from teachers’ and coaches’ reflective journals, interviews, focus group, video reflections, SBR assessment scores, and PI field notes to confirm this finding.

Assumptions

The researcher assumed the elements of the new PD (identifying a distorting dilemma, critical reflection, dialogue, and planned change) would be effective in transforming the teaching practice of preschool teachers due to past findings in the extensive literature review. During this study, the researcher used multiple data sources to confirm findings and avoid errors based on assumptions related to prior research. Based on previous research, effective PD includes early literacy skills-training (i.e., oral vocabulary, pre-writing best practices, and expertise in letter-sound correspondence) (Dickinson & Smith, 1994). Levels of communication between preschoolers and teachers correlate with successful language development. The challenge is to create learning opportunities for students of all income levels. The researcher assumed this study would add to the body of knowledge on effective PD strategies for preschool teachers, especially urban preschool teachers. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the operative elements of PD that transform teaching practices by

motivating urban preschool teachers to use SBR strategies to promote early literacy for their students. This study introduced a new PD to begin a conversation within the field of ECE among early childhood educators, PD designers, policy makers, childcare practitioners, and other early learning stakeholders who can improve PD practices for preschool teachers while teaching literacy and increasing vocabulary acquisition for low-income preschoolers.

Implications

This study may become a platform for discussion among emerging educational leadership doctoral administrators and their students when exploring effective elements of PD for preschool teachers. This research study occurred in a large, urban, federally-funded preschool program. Further research in different settings may yield different results. The diverse educational backgrounds and experiences of the teachers may have future research implications as well. Future researchers may also explore child outcomes after implementation of the new PD in a preschool program.

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Appendix A. Focus Group Questions

“Thank you for meeting with me today. I would like to introduce myself as Sarah Jane Henry a Graduate student in the school of Education at the University of Bridgeport. I will speak about myself and remind the participants that all information is **confidential** and will be voice recorded while also reminding the participants they should identify themselves only by their **pseudonyms** when speaking to protect their identity

This focus group will take about 45 minutes.

Please state your **pseudonym** prior to answering each question.

Why were you interested in this shared reading strategies PD?

What makes it interesting?

Would you continue to use these strategies in your classroom?

What are the good aspects?

What aspects need to be improved?

Describe your PD experience with your coaches?

Please describe your experience when the coach is modeling the shared reading strategy.

Please describe your experience with the reflective journaling.

Please describe your experience with video reflections.

Please describe you experience when discussing the SBR assessment scores with your coach.

Would you change anything about this experience?

Have the Shared Reading strategies changed your teaching practice?

Describe How?

Describe why you think you are changing or have changed with receiving this PD?

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with this PD?

“Thank you for your time. This focus group will be transcribed and coded by Ms.

Ferguson to answer the research questions.

Appendix B. Interview Questions

“Thank you for meeting with us today. I would like to introduce Sarah Jane Henry. She is the University of Bridgeport Graduate student who will assist me in the interviewing and the focus groups during the study.”

Sarah Jane will speak about herself and remind the participants that all information is **confidential** and will be voice recorded while also reminding the participants they should identify themselves only by their **pseudonyms** when speaking to protect their identity.

“The interview will take about 30 minutes.”

“Please state your pseudonym”

“The purpose of this research study is to explore how urban preschool teachers transform their practice through Professional Development on shared reading.”

Was this PD different from any other you have received?

How?

What are your perceptions/ thoughts about the new PD?

Please describe your experience when the coach is modeling the shared reading strategy.

Please describe your experience with the reflective journaling.

Please describe your experience with video reflections.

Please describe your experience when discussing the SBR assessment scores with your coach.

Have you changed your practice with the use of these strategies?

Describe how?

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with this PD?

Thank you for your time. This interview will be transcribed by Ms. Ferguson and coded for themes.

Appendix C. Instructional Support Codes

Instructional Support Codes—Page 1		Teacher ID _____ Sub: _____ Aide: _____ Other: _____	Title of Book _____	Genre: <input type="checkbox"/> Narrative <input type="checkbox"/> Informational <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed																																
		Video # _____	Author _____	Book features: <input type="checkbox"/> ABC <input type="checkbox"/> Counting <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter & <input type="checkbox"/> Reference <input type="checkbox"/> Rhyming <input type="checkbox"/> Pattern																																
		Coder ID _____	Group: <input type="checkbox"/> Large group (7+), <input type="checkbox"/> Small group (3-6), <input type="checkbox"/> Two C's, <input type="checkbox"/> One C	Dual language text: <input type="checkbox"/> No, <input type="checkbox"/> Yes																																
		Coding Date _____	Language (other than English) _____	Special text: <input type="checkbox"/> Electronic (book computer), <input type="checkbox"/> Book on tape, <input type="checkbox"/> Big book																																
CONSTRUCTS	CODING CATEGORIES	INTERVALS →	15	30	45	1:00	1:15	1:30	1:45	2:00	2:15	2:30	2:45	3:00	3:15	3:30	3:45	4:00	4:15	4:30	4:45	5:00	5:15	5:30	5:45	6:00	6:15	6:30	6:45	7:00	7:15	7:30	7:45	7:55	8:00	
I. Instructional Support	Language Development	START TIME: Time book-related discussion began if not start of video – (min, sec)																																		
		1a. [L] Notice, label, or describe story actions (i.e., verbs); perceptually present	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30				
		1b. [L] Ask for or provide noun label, locate, or notice (no modifier, but can include preposition; includes rote counting)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30				
		1c. [L] Ask for or provide noun description/characteristics (any modifier, including possession; selective focus on sets of noun)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30				
	Abstract Thinking	1d. [I] Ask for or provide a word definition ("this means" ... "this is" ... essential quality/synonym/category; example/non-example)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30				
		1e. Expand/extends C's utterance (includes change in grammatical form, adding an idea, or lag Q added to C's utterance)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30				
		2a. [I] Model or ask to compare and contrast (show differences and likenesses)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30				
		2b. [I] Model or ask for judgments, evaluations, inferences or character's point of view	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30				
	Elaborations	2c. [I] Model or ask for hypotheses or predictions about future story events, or revisit/confirm prediction	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30				
		2d. [I] Model or ask for reasoning, analysis, or explanation (e.g., conditions, effect; draw conclusions; explain hypothesis)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30				
3a. Ask for or provide a word elaboration (rich discussion, contextualize, dramatize for word meaning)		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30					
3b. Text-to-life connection (link to child or adult's personal experiences or to other texts)		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30					
Print/Phonological Skills	3c. Encourage C to dramatize/imitate/pretext (includes pretend talk to characters)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30					
	3d. Follows C spontaneous initiation with contingent verbal response that continues C's topic (T must do more than repeat C's utterance or offer a vague acknowledgement)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30					
	3e. Emotion Modeling using feeling words to discuss character emotions, emotion words in text, or own emotion responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30					
	4a. Discuss book or print conventions (title, author, illustrator, cover, spine, read left to right, read a page, how to read)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30					
	4b. Discuss letter sounds in the text (includes single letter sounds, digraphs – sh, th, wh – or letter pairs/blends – e.g., sl, br, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30					
	4c. Discuss letters or words including counting words (letter, upper/lower-case, capital, ABC's, alphabet, word's print)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30					
4d. Discuss sounds of words including rhyme, syllables, beginning sounds, phonemes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30						
Page # →																																				

Appendix D. Participants

Table 6

Participants

Name	Role	Degree	Years of experience
Monette Ferguson	PI/ Trainer	MA	11
Educational Specialist	Coach	BA	35
Educational Specialist	Coach	BA	10
Educational Specialist	Coach	BA	15
Educational Specialist	Coach	MA	10
Educational Specialist	Coach	BA	8
Teachers	Participants	AS/BA	6
Research assistant	Research assistant	MA	EdD student

Appendix E. Lesson Plan

Table 7

Stage Strategy Objectives Goals

I	Inquiry all day	Teachers will use index cards and markers to write the vocabulary words from the book. Teachers will review the vocabulary words, post around the room and refer back to the words through-out the day.	Regularly use elaborated vocabulary to convey details, including precise nouns, action verbs and descriptive adjectives
II	Before and after reading activities including all the arts.	Using collage materials, paint, markers, crayons, and scissors, teachers will connect the book reading to creative arts. They will provide children with experiences and props for dramatic play, music for dancing, above art materials for visual arts creations.	Shared book learning experiences will support teachers to engage children in and enjoy the arts including music, visual arts, drama and dance.
III	Topic Immersion	Teachers will immerse their classroom learning experiences by creating dramatic play scenes, and the arts so children can enact the story line of the book.	Will demonstrate understanding of thematic shared book reading plans and how they increase skills in vocabulary, the arts, understanding of story materials and relate to real life experiences.

Appendix F. Timeline

Table 8

Timeline

Date	Program Stage	Description	Data Sources
May 18, 2016	IRB approval	Information sessions	PI field notes
May 25, 2016	Invitations to Specialist and teachers, confidentiality agreements signed by specialists.		
July 26, 2016	Specialist training.	Three shared book strategies and the use of the SBR assessment.	PI field notes
July 29, 2016	Teacher/ Coach training in the use of the video usage.	Teachers will be trained by the PI to keep children out of the view of the camera and focus on their practice.	PI field notes
August 31, 2016	Stage I	PD on shared reading strategy 1. Specialist model strategy, followed by teaches implementation and videotaping reflection on new implementation with specialists; specialist share their SBR assessment with teachers. for feedback	Journal notes specialists, reflection journals teachers, PI field notes

		purposes. Planning for stage II.	
October 20, 2016	Stage II	PD on shared reading strategy 2. Specialist model strategy, followed by teaches implementation and videotaping reflection on new implementation with specialists; specialist share their SBR assessment with teachers for feedback purposes. Planning for stage III.	Journal notes specialists, reflection journals teachers PI field notes
January 26, 2017	Stage III	PD on shared reading strategy 3. Specialist model strategy, followed by teaches implementation and videotaping reflection on new implementation with specialists; specialist share their SBR assessment with teachers for feedback purposes.	Journal notes specialists, reflection journals teachers PI field notes
March 2017	Stage IV	Focus groups led by PI. Individual interviews by graduate assistant with teachers	Transcripts of both focus group and teacher interviews. I field notes. Journal notes from teachers and specialists
